



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## A HISTORY OF THE CITY POST-OFFICE.

BY MADISON DAVIS.

(Read before the Society May 12, 1902.)

By Section 8 of the first article of the Constitution of the United States, Congress is given the power "to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over such district (not exceeding ten miles square), as may, by cession of particular States and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the government of the United States."

In partial exercise of the power thus conveyed, two enactments were made by Congress soon after the adoption of the Constitution—one on the 16th of July, 1790, and the other on the 3d of March, 1791—by which the President of the United States was authorized to select a tract of country on both sides of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, in the states of Maryland and Virginia, not exceeding the constitutional limit, for the permanent seat of the government on and after the first Monday in December, 1800—the intention being to establish within this territory the capital city of the nation. Accordingly, President Washington, by proclamation dated the 30th of March, 1791, selected the tract previously given by the legislatures of Maryland and Virginia, afterwards known as the District of Columbia, as the seat of government; and immediately after this, by his direction, a plan of the future federal city was prepared, and arrangements entered into with the proprietors of the land, by which the government was to secure such of the laid-out lots

and parks as it might need for its own use, with the addition of such other lots as were thought to constitute a fair compensation to it for its selection of the city's site, and the owners were to have the rest.

Upon the completion of these arrangements, people began to buy lots in the new city, and to build houses upon them, and later on the government took an active part in the establishment of the city by the appointment of a board of commissioners to look after the sale of lots, and with the proceeds thereof, together with other funds from time to time appropriated, to erect such public buildings as might be required for the government's own accommodation.

This was the origin of the seat of government—at first without a name, then commonly designated the Capital City and the Federal City, and finally christened by the act of Congress of May 6, 1796, the City of Washington, in the District of Columbia. It did not rise, like most other cities, out of the necessities of society, or because of its convenient position at the terminus of or along some great highway of trade, or from any natural advantages as a prospective center of industry: it rose as ancient Alexandria and modern St. Petersburg did—merely from the edict of the governing power. The supreme authority of the nation said, Let there be a city in this spot, and there was one. May its life, like that of the Republic, be perpetual, and may it receive, far more than it has in the past, such fostering care and intelligent consideration at the hands of its creator that not only its own citizens, but those of all other parts of the country, shall feel a just and patriotic pride in its greatness, its culture, and its beauty.

The post-office of the City of Washington, of course, grew out of the same creative act; but its actual exist-

ence began some years after. It was not until the year 1795 that the population and business of the city had grown sufficiently to warrant the establishment of a post-office; and then it was designated not as Washington in the District of Columbia, but as Washington in the state of Maryland; so that even now, when we wish to learn from the records of the Post-Office Department anything relating to the office during the period from June 24, 1795, the date of its establishment, to the first Monday in December, 1800, when the United States began to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over the federal district, we must examine the registers for Maryland.

The first postmaster of the city was Thomas Johnson, Jr., the first clerk of the Board of Commissioners for the City of Washington, and son of the chairman of the board—the celebrated Thomas Johnson, the first governor of the state of Maryland, the friend of Washington, one of the leading champions in Maryland of the adoption of the Constitution—a man whose services to his state and country were so pure, so disinterested, so patriotic, and of such magnitude that the record of them should be written in letters of gold.

The younger Johnson—our postmaster—was born in Frederick County, Maryland, on his father's farm, about the year 1770. There is no accessible record of his career before he became postmaster, except that he was appointed clerk of the first Board of Commissioners of the City of Washington, of which his father was the most distinguished member. He probably received an academic education, and was of fair natural ability. He was tendered the appointment of postmaster by the Postmaster-General on the 24th of June, 1795, and he promptly accepted the place—actually entering upon its duties on the 17th of July, 1795. The



emoluments of the position were of course only trifling, but the duties of the place were somewhat onerous, as we find that there were six mails dispatched every week—three to the south and three to the north—to say nothing of the mails that were received. The following public announcement of Mr. Johnson's appointment to the office of postmaster, taken from the files of the *Impartial Observer and Washington Advertiser* of July 17, 1795\*—an old newspaper whose existence has for a century been forgotten—is quite interesting as settling the hitherto disputed question as to the first location of the post-office—on the north side of F Street between 13th and 14th Streets N. W.—and as showing that the office actually began business—in July, 1795—three months before the postmaster was commissioned, as shown by the records of the Post-Office Department.

CITY OF WASHINGTON, July 17, 1795.

The subscriber having lately received an appointment of postmaster of the City of Washington, gives this public notice that he has opened the post office at his house in F Street north, square No. 253, east of the President's Square, where attendance will be given for the purpose of receiving and delivering letters.

The mail for the southward will be made up and closed at 2 o'clock on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and mail for the northward at 8 o'clock in the evening of the same days.

T. JOHNSON, JR., P. M.

Mr. Johnson did not live to enjoy the honor of his position very long. He died in the latter part of December, 1795,—having held the office of postmaster not quite six months. He left a small estate, consisting of property in Maryland, a considerable number of lots

\* I am indebted to Mr. Wilhelmus B. Bryan, of the Columbia Historical Society, for the discovery of this interesting notice. I believe that the only copy of the paper from which it is taken is in the library of the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Mass.

in the City of Washington, and some personalty. His last month's salary as clerk of the Board of Commissioners was paid to his administrator, as we find in the record of the board's proceedings under date of February 18, 1796.

A passage in the following letter, tendering Mr. Johnson the appointment of postmaster, is quite interesting, as affording a contrast between the condition of F Street then and F Street now:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILA., June 24, 1795.

THOMAS JOHNSON, JUNR., ESQR.

*Sir:* A number of gentlemen having recommended you for postmaster at the City of Washington, I do hereby tender to you that office, and should it be agreeable to you to accept of it, be pleased to execute the enclosed bond with sufficient surety, and return it to me, together with the oaths required by law to be taken and subscribed, (blank forms of which are inclosed,) and as soon as I receive them I will send you a commission in due form.

I send herewith a packet containing the post office law, with instructions conformable therewith, together with a key of the mail and all the blank forms of accounts, etc., used in conducting the business; and as soon as you have executed the bond and taken the oaths, you may enter on the duties of your office without waiting for a commission.

The contractor who carries the mail from Baltimore to Alexandria has represented to me that the road which leads past your house is not so good as the old road, and also that it is considerably further. Be pleased to inform me particularly of the state of the two roads, and the difference in distance between them. Should the new road at any season of the year be so bad as to impede the progress of the mail, I trust the commissioners for building the city will make the necessary repairs, as any obstruction to a regular conveyance of the mail upon the main line will be attended with great injury to the public.

I am, sir, &c.,

CHARLES BURRALL,

*Asst. Postmaster-General.*

On the 1st of January, 1796, the second postmaster of the city, Christopher Richmond—popularly known

as Major Richmond—entered upon the duties of the office. He was a man of energy, ability, and patriotism, though but little is now known of his life. He was born in Maryland, of a good family, was active in opposition to the policy of England in the government of the colonies, and early entered the military establishment of his state. In 1777 he was a lieutenant in the Second Maryland regiment, and on the reorganization of the Maryland line in the Continental army he was commissioned first lieutenant of the First Maryland regiment. He remained in the service until 1780. In 1784 he appears to have been auditor general for the state of Maryland, and to have served in the Invalid regiment after he was disabled in the army of General Washington. He was a very close friend of Governor Thomas Johnson, and through his influence was appointed book-keeper and paymaster to the Board of Commissioners of the City of Washington, his appointment as such dating from January 1, 1795.

As was the case with his predecessor, he found the office of postmaster an undesirable one, but he held it until his death, which occurred in less than nine months after his appointment. The emoluments of the place were certainly small. Where he kept his office is not positively known, but it may be reasonably conjectured. He was the owner of lot 11 in Square 290, which is on the southeast corner of F and Thirteenth Streets, where he had his residence. Here he no doubt kept the post-office.

The following letter to William Cranch, later on the eminent chief justice of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, shows that the Postmaster-General had a high ideal when he came to make his selection of a successor to Major Richmond:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, April 20, 1779.

WILLIAM CRANCH, ESQ.

*Sir:* I am just favored with your letter of the 14th inst. Under an idea that you had been a candidate for the appointment of deputy postmaster\* for the City of Washington at the time of Major Richmond's death, I was much disposed to have made you a tender of it in the first instance on a late occasion. When referring, however, to your letter, I found that you had only recommended a successor to Major Richmond, and I was informed that from your residence and extensive practice as an attorney, the appointment in question could not be an object of the smallest importance to you.

J. HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

On the 1st of October, 1796, one of the President's distant kinsmen, Lund Washington, became postmaster—his appointment being an exception to Washington's rule of not putting his relatives into public office.

When Lund Washington was born is not known, nor what was his exact relationship to the President. His place of birth was probably Westmoreland County, Virginia. He was associated with Washington in matters of business from 1761, and during the whole of the Revolutionary War acted as his confidential steward and man of business. Throughout this entire connection he was intrusted with the most important affairs of the General, and he seems to have executed his trust with rare fidelity and good sense. Only once did he subject himself to reproof, and then his offence—the extension of courtesies to officers of a British fleet that had ascended the Potomac during the Revolutionary struggle—was caused by a too zealous care for his employer's interest. The facts leading to this rebuke, and the considerateness and tact with which it was admin-

\* The office here named is what is now universally called postmaster. In early days the office was commonly designated deputy postmaster—all postmasters being considered deputies to the head postmaster or Postmaster-General.

istered, afford such a beautiful illustration of Washington's character that I feel warranted in here reproducing his letter:

NEW WINDSOR, 30 April, 1781.

*Dear Lund:* I am very sorry to hear of your loss: I am a little sorry to hear of my own. But that which gives me most concern is, that you should go on board the enemy's vessels and furnish them with refreshments. It would have been a less painful circumstance to me to have heard that in consequence of your non-compliance with their request, they had burned my house and laid the plantation in ruins. You ought to have considered yourself as my representative, and should have reflected on the bad example of communicating with the enemy, and making a voluntary offer of refreshments to them with a view to prevent a conflagration.

It was not in your power, I acknowledge, to prevent them from sending a flag on shore, and you did right to meet it; but you should, in the same instant that the business of it was unfolded, have declared explicitly that it was improper for you to yield to the request, after which, if they had proceeded to help themselves by force, you could but have submitted; and being unprovided for defence, this was to be preferred to a feeble opposition, which only serves as a pretext to burn and destroy.

I am thoroughly persuaded that you acted from your best judgment, and believe that your desire to preserve my property and rescue the buildings from impending danger was your governing motive; but to go on board their vessels, carry them refreshments, commune with a parcel of plundering scoundrels, and request a favor by asking a surrender of my negroes, was exceedingly ill-judged, and, it is to be feared, will be unhappy in its consequences, as it will be a precedent for others, and may become a subject for animadversion.

I am sincerely yours,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

In another letter of Washington's, concerning this same subject, written to Lafayette, he speaks thus of his confidence in the character and patriotism of Lund Washington:

A false idea, arising from the consideration of his being my steward, and in that character more the trustee and guardian of my property than the representative of my honor, has misled his judgment and plunged him into error upon the appearance of desertion among my negroes and danger to my buildings; for sure I am that no man is more firmly opposed to the enemy than he is. From a thorough conviction of this, and of his integrity, I trusted every species of my property to his care without reservation or fear of his abusing it.

At the time Mr. Washington became postmaster, a fierce rivalry existed between the eastern and western portions of the young city in the erection of houses and in the engrossment of business. The commissioners of the city rather favored the western section; but as regards the location of the post-office the Postmaster-General favored a central position as one most convenient for the people. His letter appointing Mr. Washington shows this preference:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILA., May 11, 1796.

LUND WASHINGTON, ESQ.

*Sir:* The office of deputy postmaster of the City of Washington being vacant by the death of the late Christopher Richmond, Esqr., I now make you a tender of it.

It will be necessary for the person who accepts the appointment, if not residing there, immediately to repair to the city to take charge of the office, which I expect will be kept in a situation nearly central between the President's House and the Capitol. If it should be agreeable to you to hold the office, you will please to execute the enclosed bond with sufficient security, and take and subscribe the oaths, blank forms of which you will also receive.

When properly executed you will return the bond and oaths to this office, and your commission shall be immediately forwarded to you with an order to receive the papers and other articles of the post-office property from Mr. Donlevy, who is now in possession of them.

I am, &c.,

JOSEPH HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

Mr. Washington, it seems, had a different idea from that of the Postmaster-General as to the location of the post-office. He was early taken in hand by the advocates of the eastern section, besides, no doubt, being naturally inclined to favor that part of the city on account of General Washington's property interests there; so that, with the sanction of the Post-Office Department, we find him establishing his quarters on Capitol Hill in Square 728, and there keeping them until he ceased to be postmaster. The building where the post-office was thus kept is no longer standing; but tradition has it that much of the old material in it was used in the erection of a stable, occupying the same site, in the rear of Governor N. G. Ordway's residence near the corner of First and East Capitol Streets. In the following letter, the Postmaster-General sanctions Mr. Washington's selection:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILA., May 26, 1796.

LUND WASHINGTON, ESQR.

*Sir:* I have received your letter of the 24th of May, with your bond, and I now enclose you a commission as deputy postmaster of the City of Washington. I am informed that your situation in the square of the Capitol will be rather more convenient for a post-office than the one I proposed, and you may fix it in Square No. 728 for the present. Mr. Donlevy will deliver all papers or any other property belonging to the post office on your presenting the enclosed order to him. If you are in want of any blanks, they will be forwarded from this office on your application for them, and any information respecting your duty will at all times be readily given you.

I am, &c.,

JOSEPH HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

Mr. Washington seems to have been a popular and efficient postmaster, giving careful attention to the interests of the public, but certainly not neglecting his own, as is shown by a demand for extra compensation made about two months after he got into his seat:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 26, 1796.  
LUND WASHINGTON, ESQ.

*Sir:* I have received your letters on the subject of an increased compensation in consequence of having to dispatch the mails at unseasonable hours of the night and morning. Will you be so good as to be particular in stipulating how often and at what hours, either late at night or very early in the morning, you are engaged with the mail through the summer and winter, that I may know in what proportion to advance your commissions.

I am much obliged to you for your information as to the condition in which the mails have arrived at your office. The contractors have given me the most positive assurance that they will have boxes so contrived and fixed as to secure the mails from being exposed to the weather, and I will not fail to remind them of the necessity of complying with those assurances. The mail is of too much importance to be carried any longer under the driver's feet, and I shall endeavor to prevent it in future.

I am, &c.,

J. HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, February 9, 1797.  
LUND WASHINGTON, ESQ.

*Sir:* . . .

You will be allowed to charge 30 per cent. commissions on the two winter quarters in which you are engaged with the mails three times a week at 5 o'clock in the morning, which is a very unseasonable hour to be obliged to rise at, and certainly entitles you to an increased compensation.

A new Post Office bill is before the Senate. If that passes, your commissions must be changed conformably thereto in all future transactions of your office.

Be so good as to forward your accounts as soon as possible.

I am, &c.,

J. HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

An instance of his enterprise as postmaster is shown in his early application for the appointment of an



official letter-carrier—designated in those days as “the penny-post”—and his securing consent to the demand:\*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, April 18, 1798.

LUND WASHINGTON, Esq.

*Sir:* Yours of the 18th ultimo was duly received. Blanks for accounts of letters, &c., received and sent, were forwarded immediately, and for accounts current are sent herewith.

You will please to employ a letter-carrier for the delivery of letters in Washington City whenever you find a proper person, and as long as it shall appear to you of use.

I am, &c.,

CHARLES BURRALL,  
*Asst. Postmaster-General.*

The scope of the business of the office was greatly increased during Mr. Washington's administration, as also the postal revenue. In the last year of his term, the gross receipts of the office amounted to nearly \$8,000, and the mails coming from and going to other points numbered four every other day. Undelivered letters, too, were regularly advertised, and we find in the old files of the *Washington Gazette* and the *National Intelligencer* long and interesting lists of these early dead letters.

The rather large emoluments of the office, however, and perhaps the postmaster's unfortunate habits, finally

\* As far back as the reign of Charles II. letter-carriers, or penny-postmen, were employed to make personal delivery of letters in the city of London. Benjamin Franklin in his “Autobiography” states that he employed them of his own volition when he was postmaster of Philadelphia; while by the act of Parliament of 1765—5th George III.—authority was given the Postmaster-General to establish penny-post offices anywhere in America. The first act of Congress authorizing them was that of May 8, 1794, section 28. This authority was repeated in the 27th section of the act of March 2, 1799; again in the 34th section of the act of April 30, 1810; and again in the 36th section of the act of March 3, 1825, under which these officers continued to be employed until the establishment of the present system of free delivery by salaried letter-carriers under the provisions of the act of March 3, 1863.

got him into difficulties, and brought about his official downfall. He was dismissed as a defaulter on the 29th of January, 1799, and several years after, as we find from a judicial advertisement in the *National Intelligencer* of October 18, 1805, he was confined in a debtor's prison. This, however, need not be regarded as singular, for three of the wealthiest men in the nation—Robert Morris, the great financier of the Revolution, James Greenleaf, the millionaire, and John Nicholson, the financial agent of Pennsylvania during the Revolutionary struggle—all largely interested in the development of the federal city—became bankrupt, and in consequence thereof, for a time were deprived of their personal liberty as insolvent debtors.

The following correspondence in connection with Lund Washington's default is worthy of publication, as showing that it was probably due to intemperance and not to dishonesty, and as indicating the Postmaster-General's disposition to deal gently and mercifully, but without any relaxation of justice, towards a kinsman of the first President:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, Jany. 24, 1799.  
LUND WASHINGTON, ESQ., P. M., Washington City.

*Sir:* The Assistant Postmaster General gave Mr. Evans, one of the contractors, an order on you, dated the 1st of August last, for \$200, which was returned unpaid, and on the 11th of October he reminded you that a speedy remittance of the balance was indispensable. In answer to his letter, you informed him that the balance should be forwarded in the course of a few days, since which there has been no communication from you on the subject. Notwithstanding it is a general rule at this office to remove every postmaster who refuses payment of our drafts, in the present instance I have waited since the month of August last in hopes that a compliance with your promise would prevent my having recourse to that very disagreeable step. No remittance, however, is yet received, and your balances, nearly a year and a half in arrears, have

accumulated to about six hundred dollars, for the greater part of which I am now personally responsible, as no suit is commenced within the time limited by law for the recovery of the debt. The business of this office is very laborious when postmasters discharge the duties required of them with punctuality; but it is rendered extremely irksome by a different conduct on the part of the deputies. Under these circumstances a sense of duty, and my personal interest,\* make it necessary for me to place the office of postmaster of the City of Washington in other hands, and I have therefore made a tender of it to Mr. Munroe, of the Commissioners' office. If he accepts the appointment, you will be pleased to deliver him the maps of the postroads, with all letters and articles of post-office property that may be in your possession.

I hope, sir, you will not compel me to take another disagreeable step—that of commencing a suit for the recovery of the balance you owe the public, which must be done unless it is speedily remitted.

I am, sir,

JOSEPH HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 24, 1799.

THOMAS MUNROE, ESQ.,

*Sir:* I find it necessary to make a new appointment of deputy postmaster of the City of Washington, and you are recommended to me in such favorable terms as to induce me to make you a tender of it. If you accept the appointment, you will be pleased to execute the bond and oath which are now enclosed. When these papers are properly executed, they are to be returned to this office, and on receiving them a commission will be immediately transmitted to you as postmaster of the city.

Mr. Washington is apprised of your appointment, and will deliver you all letters and blanks remaining on hand, the key of the mail, maps of the post-roads, and any other articles of post-office property that may be in his possession.

In respect to a situation for the post-office, from every information I have received on the subject, Blodgett's Hotel appears to be the spot that will afford the most general ac-

\* In the early days of the Post-Office Department, the Postmaster-General was by law made personally responsible for all official indebtedness of a postmaster unless suit for its recovery was begun within a prescribed time after the indebtedness was ascertained.

commodation. I wish it, therefore, to be kept there, or as near it as possible. If, however, there should be any obstacle to fixing the office at that place, then, I presume, either the square of the Capitol or the President's square will answer for a temporary situation. When the seat of government is removed to the city, it will be necessary to take the most eligible spot for a permanent situation for the office.

I am, etc.,

JOSEPH HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, March 4, 1799.

LUND WASHINGTON, ESQUIRE.

*Sir:* I received yours of the 31st December, but an uncommon pressure of business during the session of Congress has hitherto prevented an earlier reply to it.

Your conduct while in office, so far as regards the general duties of it, was unexceptionable except in making remittances. I can with pleasure add that your integrity stands unimpeachable while you held that appointment.

Two months have elapsed since you promised to remit the balance of your account on Mr. Munroe's entering upon the duties of the office. I shall wait a few weeks longer, and if the money due from you is not received, I must then place your bond in the hands of an attorney. I wish if possible to avoid taking this step, as it must be productive of expense and other disagreeable consequences to you.

Yours, etc.,

JOSEPH HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

On the 30th of January, 1799, Thomas Munroe became postmaster. As was the case with two of his predecessors, he was born in Maryland, but in what part of it I am unable to learn—probably in the city of Annapolis. His father was William Munroe, a prominent merchant of that city, and evidently a man of courage and high principle; for, though a zealous patriot himself, we find his name appended to a series of resolutions, adopted in 1774 at a meeting of citizens of Annapolis, protesting, because of its dishonest nature,

against an attempt then being made by some of the most eminent patriots of Maryland to interfere with the payment of just debts to merchants and others in England. The son, Thomas, was born on the 7th of August, 1771, and he died in Washington on the 14th of April, 1852. As he was the clerk of the first Board of Commissioners to lay out the city and to see to the erection of the proposed government buildings, it is likely that he first came to Washington in 1791, and from Annapolis, where he had previously resided. He was then about twenty years of age, his friend and patron no doubt being Governor Thomas Johnson (the father of the first postmaster), whom President Washington had just appointed a member of the Federal City Commission. Five years afterwards he was married to Fanny, daughter of William Wheterofter, a public-spirited merchant of Annapolis, by whom he had four children—two sons and two daughters. Among his descendants are Admiral F. M. Ramsay, John Sidney Webb, and H. Randall Webb, all of Washington City. At the time of his death he was in the eighty-first year of his age, being then the oldest citizen of Washington.

Mr. Munroe not only held the office of postmaster and clerk to the Board of Commissioners of the new city, but he was afterwards the Superintendent of Public Grounds of the District of Columbia, which office he held from its creation, June 1, 1802, until the year 1818. He was a man of great public spirit, and was personally interested in a number of business corporations in Washington. In connection with Judge William Cranch, General John P. Van Ness, and several others, he established the first manufacturing company in the federal city—the organization being known as the Columbia Manufacturing Company, and its business being the manufacture of cotton fabrics. He was also,



THOMAS MUNROE,  
POSTMASTER OF WASHINGTON CITY,  
1799 TO 1829.

in 1796, an officer of the famous old Bank of Columbia of Georgetown, in 1808 one of the incorporators of the Washington Bridge Company for building the Long Bridge across the Potomac, a director of the Patriotic Bank, and one of the founders of the Bank of the Metropolis, still doing business, but now known as the National Metropolitan Bank.

Mr. Munroe resided mostly in the western part of the city, on Pennsylvania Avenue. His widow survived him six years, dying on the 16th of September, 1858, at the advanced age of eighty-four. He was an Episcopalian. In person he was quite handsome—indeed, he was a very distinguished-looking man.

As soon as Mr. Munroe was appointed postmaster the struggle between the partisans of the eastern and western parts of the city as to the location of the post-office, was revived, but with a different result. The postmaster removed the office to the north side of F between 13th and 14th Streets—no doubt to the very house that had been used as an office by Thomas Johnson, the first postmaster. A strong remonstrance against this removal was made to the Postmaster-General by Daniel Carroll of Duddington and others interested in the eastern section, but without avail, as is seen in the following letter:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, May 8, 1799.

DANIEL CARROLL AND OTHERS.

*Gentlemen:* I have duly considered the contents of your last letter, relative to the situation of the post-office in the City of Washington, and the result is that my opinion is not changed on that subject.

It appears from every information I have received—and I have taken some pains to be well informed on the subject—that Blodgett's Hotel would be the most central spot for the office as respects the present population of the city. I cannot, therefore, think that square No. 253 is an inconvenient situa-

tion for it. From the present scattered population of the city, no spot can be fixed on which would not be extremely remote from and inconvenient to a few other inhabitants; it has therefore been my wish to place the office as nearly central as circumstances will admit. In making these arrangements I have had no other object in view than the most general accommodation, and in the present instance it has been consulted to the best of my judgment.

I regret exceedingly that our opinions differ so widely on the present occasion; but with the impression I am under as to the most eligible spot for the post-office, it would be an act of injustice in me to compel Mr. Munroe to incur any expense in removing his office from its present situation, especially when the emoluments of it are so inadequate to the services rendered by him.

J. HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

In the situation referred to in the foregoing letter Mr. Munroe kept the post-office until the removal of the government departments from Philadelphia during the following year, when he moved into the building rented for the use of the Post-Office Department, on the northwest corner of 9th and E Streets N. W.—a building that has long since been destroyed. After it ceased to be used by the government it was occupied for years as a residence by Joseph Gales, the celebrated editor of the *National Intelligencer*, and was the resort of many distinguished persons, friends of that gentleman. In the following extracts from two letters of Abraham Bradley, the Assistant Postmaster-General, interesting allusion is made to this building:

On the 2d of June, 1800, he says:

We arrived here on Friday last, having had a pleasant journey as far as we travelled by daylight. Capt. Stevenson, with whom I agreed for a house before my arrival, was not ready to give possession, and the house was not convenient for us. I have therefore taken a large three-story house within a few rods of Blodgett's Hotel, which will accommodate the





BUILDING OCCUPIED AS CITY POST OFFICE DURING PART OF THE TIME OF POSTMASTER MUNROE'S ADMINISTRATION.  
Located on F street, between Fourteenth and Fifteenth streets, in rear of present Branch P. O. Station "C."  
From a photograph in possession of the Society.

office and my family, and the postmaster's office. It is about equidistant from the President's House and the Capitol.

On the 11th of June, 1800, Mr. Bradley further writes:

We have not been able to open the office and commence business until this day. I left Philadelphia Wednesday, May 27th, and arrived on Friday evening the 29th. The President left Philadelphia the 26th and arrived at Georgetown June 1st. The situation of the city is extremely pleasant, and it will probably become the greatest city in America.

We have taken Dr. Crocker's house for this office (close by the Great Hotel) and for my family at \$600 a year. The apportionment of the rent I shall leave to you. It appears that \$200 a year is as much as I ought to pay for a house. Our office is kept on the second floor, which contains one large room and two small ones. The largest room is 27 by 17 feet, and the smallest rooms are each 15 by 14 feet. The front room on the first floor was prepared for Mr. Munroe's office, with an apartment for blanks. Only half the floors were laid when we took the house, and only four rooms were plastered. The owner allowed us to expend \$300 of the rent to make it tenantable. The carpenters are now at work, and we shall complete, as far as our money shall permit, by the last of next week, at which time Mr. Munroe will move his office here.

Mr. Munroe did not remain long in the quarters assigned him by Mr. Bradley. The building was too small for the service of both the Post-Office Department and the city post-office, and the latter therefore had to "get out." The new home of the post-office was a house on lot 3, Square 224—fronting on F Street between 14th and 15th Streets—in which Mr. Munroe resided, as appears by an old deed of trust on the property given by its owner, Pierce Pursell, on the 11th of November, 1801. This old house is still standing, in a fair state of preservation, in the rear of Station C of the Washington City post-office, being owned by

Joseph E. Willard and occupied as a store-room by Thomas A. Brown. Even in this house Mr. Munroe was not permitted to remain very long, as we shall see later on.

The following letter to Mr. Munroe, written about three months after he became postmaster, shows that while he was no doubt endeavoring to serve the public to the best of his ability, he was not tardy in looking after his own interests:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, April 11, 1799.

THOMAS MUNROE, ESQ.

*Sir:* The establishment of a line of stages from this city to Baltimore has for some weeks past engrossed so much of my attention that I could not conveniently reply earlier to your letter of the 25th of February.

There are no times fixed for the arrival of mails at the city; and I presume they vary so much that it would be very difficult to prescribe the hours of attendance at your office. The inhabitants are also scattered over such an extent of ground that it would be a subject of just complaint with many who are already dissatisfied with the present situation of the office.

The law authorizes me to increase the compensation of the deputies to 50 per cent. on the first hundred dollars collected in a quarter at such offices where the mails arrive regularly between the hours of 9 o'clock at night and 5 o'clock in the morning; and you will be allowed at that rate during the period you are engaged with the mails at the unseasonable hours you have mentioned. No other changes are provided for except for stationery, cases for the safekeeping of letters, and for advertising the list of letters remaining on hand. Charges for firewood, candles, and office rent of course cannot be allowed, as they would not be passed at the Treasury.

The letters for such persons as may empower Mr. Cooke to receive them must be delivered to him; you are right, however, not to employ him as penny-postman. I do not recollect to have given my consent to his acting as such; but if I did, I must have had a favorable opinion of his character at the time.

If you find it necessary, I shall have no objection to your employing a letter-carrier. A person in that capacity must take the oath prescribed by law.

I am convinced that your expenditures for some time to come will far exceed your compensation; but it is not in my power to place you on a better footing at present, there being no discretionary powers vested in me to increase the commissions of the deputies.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

It seems, however, that Mr. Munroe did not believe in giving too much of his time to the business of the office, as the following letters indicate—evidently there being a sort of running fight between the Post-Office Department on one side for more hours of service, and the post-office on the other for less:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., April 21, 1801.  
THOMAS MUNROE, P. M., Washington, D. C.

*Sir:* The want of fixed hours for transacting business at your office has given rise to some complaints and inconvenience, particularly to the people of Georgetown—the northern mail having in several instances arrived when no person was in the office to change it. Persons residing at a distance have been obliged from the same cause to call several times before they could accomplish their business. To prevent such inconveniences in future, it is necessary to have certain fixed hours for attendance; and it appears to me that for the purpose of transacting business at the window, your office ought to be constantly kept open from 8 a. m. to sunset, or 7 p. m. in winter, every day excepting Sunday. You will please to consider those the fixed hours for attendance for that purpose in future.

I am, &c.,  
J. HABERSHAM,  
*Postmaster-General.*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 4, 1801.  
MR. THOMAS MUNROE, P. M., Washington, D. C.

*Sir:* For the better accommodation of the government and citizens of this District, I have to request that your office be kept open from 8 o'clock a.m. until 9 o'clock p.m., and until all the various mails shall have arrived each night, and the necessary arrangements are made that the officers of the gov-

ernment and others may have letters each evening if they desire it.

With much respect, &c.,

GIDEON GRANGER,

*Postmaster-General.*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., Aug. 2, 1803.

POSTMASTER, Washington, D. C.

*Sir:* The post-office in this city will, from this time to the meeting of Congress, be kept open for the delivery of letters to the citizens on each day, Sundays excepted, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., and from half-past 3 p.m. until half-past 7 p.m.; and you will notify the citizens hereof by posting up one copy of this order on the door of your office and another copy on the outer wall near the window where the letters are delivered.

Respectfully,

GIDEON GRANGER,

*Postmaster-General.*

The following letters serve to show that Mr. Munroe was "bossed" a little by his superior officers in the Post-Office Department—a thing, however, which he bore with patience for nearly a generation, and which all of his successors in turn have had to philosophically endure:

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 5, 1812.

THOMAS MUNROE, P. M., Washington City, D. C.

*Sir:* I send you Burrall's letter of the 2d, as he requests me to. I hope you and he will not blow up a passion.

Respy, &c.,

GIDEON GRANGER,

*Postmaster-General.*

(Burrall was then the postmaster at Baltimore, Md. Previously he had been the Assistant Postmaster-General).

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 8, 1812.

THOMAS MUNROE, P. M., Washington, D. C.

*Sir:* . . .

I am informed that very large packages are sometimes sent by the mail to Thomas Jefferson, Esq., to the embarrassment

of the mail, and contrary to the spirit of the law which grants him a frank. In case of any future occurrence of this kind, I pray you to stop them at your office, and notify me, that I may take them into my own custody, for which I have Mr. Jefferson's assent.

Respy, &c.,

GIDEON GRANGER,  
*Postmaster-General.*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 5, 1810.  
THOMAS MUNROE, P. M., Washington, D. C.

*Sir:* You will please to detain the western mail this day till 5 o'clock p.m., that the message may be forwarded. You will also delay the southern mail till 5 p.m., for the same purpose.

Respectfully yours,

GIDEON GRANGER,  
*Postmaster-General.*

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 27, 1817.  
THOMAS MUNROE, P. M., Washington, D. C.

*Sir:* I wish you to inform the southern or Alexandria driver that it is his duty to announce his arrival by blowing the horn or rapping at the door. He must keep charge of the mail until the gentlemen of your office are ready to receive it.

Respectfully,

R. J. MEIGS, JR.,  
*Postmaster-General.*

For years Mr. Munroe was troubled by the custom that had grown up of giving credit to citizens for postage. He tried in various ways to avoid loss to himself by this practice, but, failing, was at last compelled to announce that he would not give credit any further. He says in this announcement that "deposits of postage may be made in advance, or satisfactory arrangements may perhaps be conveniently made *with the letter-carrier* by most of the inhabitants."

That the letter-carriers of that time, by the way, did not have a Midas's job of it, the following notice, taken from the *National Intelligencer* of February 27, 1804, sufficiently proves:

The subscriber intending to relinquish the employment of letter-carrier on the 31st of March next, supposes it may not be improper to give such previous notice thereof as may prevent any inconvenience that may arise from the want of time to employ a person in his stead, or to make any other arrangements on the subject that may be deemed necessary. He avails himself of this occasion to return his sincere thanks to those gentlemen who have so generously contributed to enable him to encounter the peculiar disadvantages attending a carrier in this place; but notwithstanding their liberal aid, he finds his emoluments so inadequate to a livelihood that he is compelled to resort to other means of support.

EDWARD ENO.

In many respects the administration of Mr. Munroe as postmaster was the most remarkable in the long history of the post-office. During it the city and district passed from state to national control, and the gross postal revenue grew from about \$8,300 in 1801 to nearly \$27,000 in 1829. In this period he saw the city invaded by a foreign army, and the public buildings burned, although his own office escaped molestation; he saw the dispatch of the mails increase from three times a week to daily, and in a few instances to even double daily, service; he saw steamboat transportation of the mails introduced upon the Potomac River in 1827; he saw the capital city expand from a hamlet of a dozen or two houses and a few hundred inhabitants to a very considerable city with a population of nearly 19,000; and he had the distinction of serving satisfactorily under five presidential administrations, and for thirty consecutive years. Throughout the whole of this time nothing was done by him deserving of suspicion or reproach. The department's letter-books may be thoroughly examined, and nothing in the way of censure will be found except an occasional reference to a trivial mistake or act of neglect, for which the office employés, and not the postmaster himself, were

responsible. He kept in office continuously letter-carriers or penny-postmen for the delivery of mail to the houses of persons who desired that service; he dispatched and received the mails with care and regularity; he recommended through mail service to many parts of the country; he was quick to note and report errors and omissions in the management of postal business, with suggestions for its betterment; and when he was removed from office in 1829, it was not by reason of any fault of his, but simply because a strong partisan of the new administration wanted the place, and the President was willing that he should have it. The best proof of most of this is found in the fact that for some reason not now clearly known, his office was investigated in 1826, under a resolution of the Senate, and nothing was developed by the committee having the matter in charge showing the least appearance of dishonesty, neglect, mismanagement, or other impropriety.

Shortly after Mr. Munroe moved, in 1800, into the rented building on the corner of Ninth and E Streets—the first home of the Post-Office Department in the new city—the quarters were found to be too small for the use of both the general and the city post-office; and so he was compelled to seek other accommodations, finding them first, as we have heretofore seen, in a private house in Square 224, on F Street between 14th and 15th Streets, and then, about the beginning of 1802, in a public building west of the President's House, known as the Southwest Executive Building, erected between 1799 and 1801 for the accommodation of the State, War, and Navy Departments, and which continued in their joint use until August 25, 1814, when it was destroyed by the British army.\* Here he re-

\* When this building was rebuilt in 1815-16, it was called the Navy Department building, and was used by that Department exclusively.



mained until, under the following provision in the act of Congress approved April 28, 1810, he was again required to seek another official abode:

That the President of the United States be and hereby is authorized to cause the city post office and the offices of the superintendent and surveyor of the City of Washington to be immediately removed from the public building west of the President's House.

The exact date of the removal that was made under this requirement of law, and the place to which the post-office went, are now matters for conjecture only. I have been able to find no official record of either.\*

In 1810 the government purchased the unfinished building on E between Seventh and Eighth Streets, known as Blodgett's or the Great Hotel, for the use of the general and city post-offices, and of the Patent Office, and into the eastern end of the first floor of this building the city post-office was moved in the latter part of 1812. When the building was enlarged later on, the post-office still remained in it, and occupied rooms on the first floor, on the corner of Seventh and E Streets. Here it stayed until the building was burned down in 1836.

\* In some interesting manuscript notes now in the Library of Congress, prepared by the late Col. George Watterston as the basis of a history of Washington City, the statement is made that at one time the post-office was kept in a house on Pennsylvania Avenue opposite the Six Buildings. I find also, in an intelligently written communication to the *National Intelligencer* appearing in the issue of March 25, 1839, and signed *Vox Populi*, the assertion that when the post-office was crowded out of the Southwest Executive Building in 1810, it went to a rented house farther west on Pennsylvania Avenue. Furthermore, I am informed by Capt. John Stewart, at present and for many years past an invaluable assistant to the Supt. of Public Buildings and Grounds, that he has seen, though he cannot now recall the exact data, an official record to the effect that the post-office was removed in 1810 to a place on Pennsylvania Avenue west of 18th St. From these circumstances, I am inclined to think that in the interval from the abandonment of the Southwest Executive Building to the occupancy of quarters in Blodgett's Hotel, Mr. Munroe kept the office somewhere on Pennsylvania Avenue west of the President's House.

The following sections of the act of Congress of March 7, 1812, relate to this occupancy of Blodgett's Hotel:

1. That the Postmaster General, under the direction of the President of the United States, be authorized to repair and finish, in a suitable manner, for the accommodation of the Post-Office Department and the Patent Office, the two stories of the building purchased for the government by authority of the aforesaid act, being the first and second stories, including also sundry repairs on the outside and in the garret of said building, upon the principles stated in the report of the Postmaster General dated January 15, 1812.

2. That as soon as the repairs can be properly made, and before the commencement of the next annual session of Congress, the General Post-Office and the city post-office shall be removed to said public building.

From an interesting statement submitted to Congress by Postmaster-General R. J. Meigs in 1822, the following extract is made, showing the employes of the office and their compensation, together with the postmaster's salary and the miscellaneous expenses of the office for the year ending September 30, 1820:

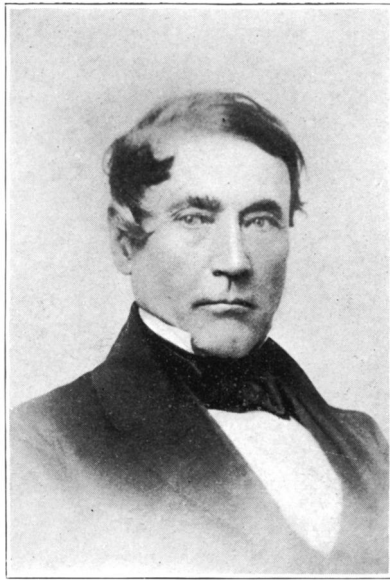
Postmaster's compensation.....	\$1,975.57
George Sweeney, clerk and assistant postmaster....	1,500.00
Edward Dyer, clerk.....	1,400.00
Thomas Munroe, Jr., clerk, son of the postmaster....	1,100.00
Columbus Munroe, clerk, son of the postmaster....	1,000.00
Alexander Dyer, John Bailey, Joseph Haskill, and Thomas Noyes, assistant clerks on Sabbaths, night, and before daylight of mornings, together.....	830.00
John Goldin, porter.....	400.00
Fuel, \$232.50; candles and oil, \$181.12; paper, quills, red and black ink, sealingwax, etc., \$147.85; re- pairs and various work in and about office, includ- ing porch and steps at letter window, east end of building, office furniture and accommodations for lodging clerks in the office, boxes, baskets, sweeping chimneys, glazing windows and washing same, etc., \$153.08 .....	714.55
Total .....	<u>\$8,920.12</u>

It is a rather singular fact that in rendering his final account to the Treasury Department as postmaster, Mr. Munroe took in all business down to May 25, 1829, and that H. D. Robertson rendered the account from that date down to the close of the quarter, when the new postmaster came in. Why the quarter's accounts should have been thus broken is not shown, nor does it appear what this Mr. H. D. Robertson was.

During the most of Mr. Munroe's incumbency, his compensation amounted to nearly \$2,000 a year, being based on commissions upon the amount of business done. He was paid, besides, a salary of \$1,200 a year as superintendent of buildings for the government.

When Andrew Jackson became President his partisans were clamorous for the public offices within his gift, and he was not at all averse to so bestowing them. Mr. Munroe, the postmaster of Washington, was among the first to suffer from this party feeling. On the 29th of April, 1829—not two months after the new administration came into power—Dr. William Jones, an enthusiastic supporter and admirer of General Jackson, a man of ability and spotless character, but a thorough believer in what has been called the "spoils system," was appointed to succeed Mr. Munroe, although he did not enter upon the duties of the office until the 1st of July following.

He was born on the 12th of April, 1790, near Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland, his father, Evan Jones, of Welsh descent, being a highly respected farmer. William was intended to follow this vocation also, but owing to the persuasion of Rev. John Breckinridge, a Presbyterian clergyman and a friend of the family, he was given a classical education at Rockville Academy, then placed under Dr. William Tyler, of Frederick, Md., as a student of medicine, and



DR. WILLIAM JONES,  
POSTMASTER OF WASHINGTON CITY,  
1829 TO 1841.

afterwards sent to attend a course of medical lectures at the University of Pennsylvania, from which he was regularly graduated. On the breaking out of the war of 1812, he entered the army as a surgeon, first getting a diploma from the medical and chirurgical faculty of Maryland, and remained such until 1815, when he resigned, and went into private practice with Dr. James H. Blake, of Washington, D. C. On the 21st of December, 1821, he married Miss Sarah L. Corcoran, daughter of Thomas Corcoran, Sr., of Georgetown, D. C., with whom he lived happily until her death, on the 24th of September, 1843.

Quite early in life Dr. Jones became interested in politics, and was a number of times elected to the Washington City councils. After the election of John Quincy Adams he became an ardent Jackson man, and was a member of the celebrated central committee in Washington of which General John P. Van Ness was president, and Henry C. Neale secretary. It is not surprising, therefore, that when General Jackson became President in 1829 he appointed Dr. Jones postmaster of the city—a post which he held through both of Jackson's terms and a part of Van Buren's—that is to say, from April 29, 1829, to March 23, 1839. He was again appointed, under Tyler's administration, on the 10th of July, 1841, holding the place until March 31, 1845; and again, during Buchanan's administration, on the 30th of March, 1858, and continuing in until May 10, 1861. His entire incumbency of the office amounted thus to nearly seventeen years. Dr. Jones was a very fair and impartial man, and of absolutely unimpeachable integrity. He was a strong partisan, but he was highly respected by everybody, and was particularly liked by both Jackson and Tyler. President Buchanan appointed him postmaster solely because he wanted to

bestow a favor upon him. He never entirely relinquished his profession, practicing through a period of fifty years, and he was never known to make a charge for his services where he knew the circumstances of his patient rendered payment very difficult and burdensome. He was a member of the Washington Monument Society, and was president of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia. He was a very charitable man, and was a professing Christian, being a member of the Episcopal Church. He was confined to his bed only two or three days before his death, which occurred on the 25th of June, 1867, he being in his seventy-eighth year.

In 1830, the first year of Dr. Jones's incumbency, the gross receipts of the office amounted to \$25,036.53; in 1839, when he went out, the receipts had increased to \$42,560.94. The postmaster's compensation increased also, and so did the force of the office. Letter-carriers or penny-postmen were kept on duty throughout all these years, and in their appointment the postmaster was never known to select any but good Jackson men.

There were two events in Dr. Jones's administration that deserve to be specially noted:

One was the introduction of railroads, and the transmission of the mails over them, which occurred in 1833. The railroad first used for this purpose was the one from this city to Baltimore. Of course the result of this innovation was more work for the post-office, growing out of the greater frequency of dispatches in and out.

The other event was the burning of the post-office building. This happened on the 15th of December, 1836. The fire occurred during the night, when there was no opportunity of securing sufficient help to extinguish it, and the report upon the case made by the Postmaster-General showed rather a negligent supervision

of the building by the postal officials. The fire originated in the eastern end of the building, in the basement, immediately under the rooms occupied by the city post-office, and was no doubt due to the neglect or carelessness of some of its employés. The entire building was destroyed, and nearly everything of value in it was burned. The letter-books of the Postmaster-General were among the few things that escaped destruction, and these were saved principally through the exertions of the late John C. Rives, who was among the first persons to arrive at the department after the fire began.

The following graphic account of this fire is taken from the *National Intelligencer* of December 16, 1836:

DISASTROUS CONFLAGRATION.—*General Post-Office and the Patent Office in Ashes.*—It is with no ordinary regret that we perform the duty of announcing the destruction by fire of the building in the central part of this city which has for many years been occupied by the General Post-Office, the Patent Office, and the city post-office, with an important part of the contents of those buildings, including the entire contents of the two latter. This calamity, great as it is, has long been feared by those old residents of Washington who knew the combustible nature of the building, (the floors being all of wood, and some of them not even countersealed,) and the custom of storing fuel, not only coal but wood, in the vaults underneath the first floor. The calamity has come at last, and affords the second demonstration within four years of the utter absurdity and improvidence of the structures to which the public archives, records, and government accounts have been hitherto for the most part confided.

The first alarm of fire was given by Mr. Crown, a messenger, who usually sleeps in the room connected with the city post-office, (the postmaster's own room.) The clerks had been at work assorting the mails until half-past 2 o'clock, when one of the persons belonging to the office (Mr. Lansdale) passed out of the east door, and along the whole front of the building, without discovering anything to give rise to a suspicion of danger. Not long after 3 o'clock Mr. Crown was aroused from a light slumber by the smell of smoke. Opening the door of the city post-office he perceived a dense smoke without any visible

appearance of fire. He gave the alarm instantly, first rousing Mr. Cox, one of the clerks, who slept in a back room adjoining the post-office, and who, coming out of the door of his room, passed along the whole of the long room with difficulty through the smoke, hearing the fire crackling, but being able to see nothing. The watchmen in the body of the building, some distance from the city post-office, had perceived nothing of the smoke until they also were alarmed by Mr. Crown.

The hour of the night when all this took place being one at which the whole world is buried in the deepest sleep, it was found almost impossible to spread the alarm of fire. One of the church bells began to ring, but the ringer, not seeing any flame, ceased ringing almost as soon as he began, and it was a full half hour before the alarm bells were rung, and more than that time before an engine or a bucket of water could be commanded. As it was, the fire had its own way, and was at last *seen* in the vault or cellar immediately under the delivery window of the city post-office, followed shortly afterwards by flames from the windows of the latter, and within five minutes afterwards by flames from the roof, the fire having crept up along the staircase or partitions to the top of the building, before it broke out below.

From the moment of the flames bursting out from the lower windows, it was obvious that all hope of saving the building was in vain. In a little more than an hour the whole interior of the building and its contents were destroyed. The books of the General Post-Office were all or nearly all saved, exertions having been made for their safety from nearly the first moment of the alarm; but a mass of papers, etc., belonging to the office were destroyed. Not anything was saved from the Patent Office, the volume of the smoke preventing anybody from penetrating the latter so as to save anything.

As to the origin of the fire, it is impossible to say anything, for nothing seems to be known of it, except that it was in a cellar or vault, in which pine wood and coal were stored, all which were probably in a state of ignition before the fire disclosed itself to the eye. We the more willingly forbear any conjectures as to the cause of the fire, since both houses of Congress have taken steps, through committees, to investigate it, and in one house with power to send for persons and papers.

Most fortunately, the night was calm and comparatively serene, or the destruction of private property would have been inevitable and great. Had it occurred on the night



previous, when the wind blew almost a hurricane, several squares of valuable buildings must have been destroyed. The means of the city for extinguishing fires are wholly inadequate to the value of the property at stake, and the sources or the supply of water for the engines are limited in their extent as well as precarious. We trust that the lesson we have just received will not be lost on those who have it in their power to apply the remedy.

Of all the amount of loss of papers and property sustained by this disaster, that which is most to be regretted, (because irreparable,) is that of the whole of the great repository of models of machines in the Patent Office. The mouldering ashes now only remain of that collected evidence of the penetration, ingenuity, and enterprise which peculiarly distinguish the descendants of Europe in the Western world.

THE CITY POST-OFFICE.—We have mentioned in the preceding article the destruction of all the contents of the city post-office. All the mails of the night and morning, including letters received by other mails for distribution by those mails, except the Warrenton, Va., and Port Tobacco, Md., mails, had been sent off before the fire occurred. All the mails received the preceding evening and in the night for delivery at this place were destroyed, including, of course, all the letters for members of Congress, different officers of the government, and editors. The transmission of mails from this place will not, we understand, be for a moment interrupted by this catastrophe.

There does not now seem to have been any good reason for so much lamentation over this “catastrophe.” The building was evidently unfit for government use; besides, as Carlyle well says, all destruction is but new creation in another form; and this fact was well exemplified some years later, when the massive and beautiful building so long known as the General Post-Office, and now as the General Land Office, was erected on the same spot.

It speaks well for the energy and efficiency of Dr. Jones and his assistants in the post-office that not a single outgoing mail from Washington was interrupted by this fire; nor did he waste any time in securing new

quarters for the use of his office. On the following morning after the fire, this notice appeared in the *Intelligencer*:

The city post-office is reopened for the present in the lower story of Mr. Seaver's brick house on Seventh Street, a few doors above the office of the *National Intelligencer*. (Cor. 7th and D Streets.)

This building, which no longer stands, was between D and E Streets, a few doors south of the present dry-goods establishment of Lansburgh & Bro. The accommodations were somewhat cramped, but the postmaster managed to get along with them, and no arrangement for a larger room was made until a year after, when the office was moved to the old Masonic Hall, still standing, on the corner of Four-and-a-half Street and Louisiana Avenue. Dr. Jones's announcement of the removal was made in the *National Intelligencer* of December 31, 1837, as follows:

The City Post-Office will at 4 o'clock this day be removed to the Masonic Hall, corner Louisiana Avenue and Four-and-a-half Street, and opposite the City Hall. The delivery will be on Four-and-a-half Street.

WM. JONES,  
Postmaster.

During the whole of Dr. Jones's incumbency, his salary as postmaster was \$2,000 a year. Here is the roster of his office in 1830, with the salaries:

Thomas Corcoran, assistant postmaster.....	\$1,500
Thomas L. Noyes, clerk.....	1,400
Wm. A. Rind, Jr., clerk.....	1,000
Lambert Tree, clerk.....	800
Isaac Clark, clerk.....	800
George S. Noyes, clerk.....	600
James A. Kennedy.....	400
John Bell.....	300
Elisha D. Berry.....	250

The Thomas Corcoran mentioned in the above list was a brother-in-law of Dr. Jones, and a brother of the



MASONIC HALL, CORNER OF JOHN MARSHALL PLACE AND D STREET.

Used as Post Office in 1836-1837.

celebrated Wm. W. Corcoran, the millionaire philanthropist of Washington. Lambert Tree afterwards became assistant postmaster. He remained in office for two generations, and died when he was nearly ninety years of age.

The annual gross receipts of the office greatly increased during Dr. Jones's administration of its affairs. The year after he went in they amounted to \$25,000; when he went out they had risen to nearly \$43,000. The letter-carrier or penny-post system also continued during the whole of the postmaster's term; and the department evidently regarded it as an important branch of the service, as is indicated by the following letter:

POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 24, 1836.  
DR. WM. JONES, Postmaster, Washington, D. C.

*Sir:* The bonds and oaths of the letter-carriers at Washington having been destroyed by fire on the 15th inst., you are requested to see that the enclosed are properly executed and returned immediately. Respectfully,

SELAH R. HOBBIE,  
*Assistant Postmaster-General.*

Pronounced though Dr. Jones was as a Jacksonian Democrat, he was removed from his position, during the administration of that equally pronounced Democrat, Martin Van Buren, and his place given to Dr. James S. Gunnell. This change caused considerable surprise, and excited even the Whigs to temporary resentment. Here is what the *National Intelligencer*, in its issue of March 23, 1839, said of the change:

Again the guillotine is at work! And now as always, when the odious spirit of political intolerance demoralizes and desolates society, the heads of the worthiest and the most honorable in public stations are the first that fall under the axe.

When we heard a few days ago of the removal from office of Dr. Wm. Jones, the postmaster of the city, we were struck with surprise, because we had never heard of any objection to his official conduct, and because we had no information of his being obnoxious to the members of the present administration. Not being apprised, however, of the cause of the removal, we supposed it possible that the President or the Postmaster General might have had some personal reason, of which we could know nothing, and of the sufficiency of which we therefore could not judge, for making the change. We heard it rumored, indeed, that the ground of his removal was a suspicion of his being friendly to Mr. Senator Rives, and not as decided a supporter of Locofoco principles as he was in duty bound to be. But we could not believe that the President would sanction his removal on such grounds, however certain persons of his privy council might desire it.

The mail of yesterday, however, brings us information which leaves no longer room to doubt that a ruthless and vindictive war is to be waged not only against everything like independence in public officers, but against all such as are suspected of not using their offices to the best advantage for party purposes.

The appointment of Dr. Gunnell was not due to the policy of which the *Intelligencer* here makes so loud a complaint. The removal of Dr. Jones, it is true, may have been due to a suspicion that he was not entirely in accord with the administration, but Dr. Gunnell was, it seems, appointed by President Van Buren purely out of personal regard. He had been for a long time a near neighbor of Mr. Van Buren when he was Secretary of State, and the relations between the two were exceedingly intimate and friendly; so that when the Secretary became President he voluntarily appointed his friend to the office of postmaster, without any reference to his politics, without the slightest solicitation by the Doctor, and, indeed, without his previous knowledge.

Dr. Gunnell was born in Loudoun County, Virginia, in the year 1788, and was educated at the Leesburg Academy, afterwards—in 1820—graduating in medi-

cine at the University of Pennsylvania. Before this he had been a lieutenant of light horse in the war of 1812. After graduating he settled in Washington, and there pursued the practice of his profession. He was married, and had a family of six children. One of his sons—Dr. F. M. Gunnell—is now medical director of the United States Navy, retired. He was a very amiable and popular gentleman, and his removal from the office of postmaster—purely for political reasons—was regretted pretty generally. His residence for many years was at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Madison Place, opposite Lafayette Square, and just south of the Lafayette Opera House.

One result of the new appointment was a change in the office of assistant postmaster. Thomas Corcoran retired, and a gentleman of the name of B. F. Mackall came in, who himself, however, was put out after two years of service.

Another result was the removal of the post-office to a new situation. Even before Dr. Gunnell was installed, he announced his intention to leave the Masonic Hall and go to the building that had been used by the Bank of the United States on the northwest corner of 15th Street and New York Avenue—afterwards used as the banking-house of Corcoran & Riggs. This announcement led to very considerable opposition to Dr. Gunnell's plans, and the old fight between the eastern and western sections of the city was renewed with some of its ancient bitterness. In a month or two a compromise seems to have been reached, as appears from the following notice, which appeared in the *National Intelligencer* of June 29, 1839:

The Washington City post office is this day removed to the corner of Twelfth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

J. S. GUNNELL, *Postmaster*.

The building in which the post-office was thus established was torn down shortly afterward, to give place to a large structure used as a hotel. This was known for many years as the Kirkwood House, and became famous as the place where the Lincoln conspirators, in 1865, attempted to assassinate the Vice-President, Andrew Johnson. The property was subsequently purchased by Alexander R. Shepherd, who built a fine house upon the site, which was used by him for several years as a place of business. The building was finally converted into a hotel, being known now as "The Raleigh."

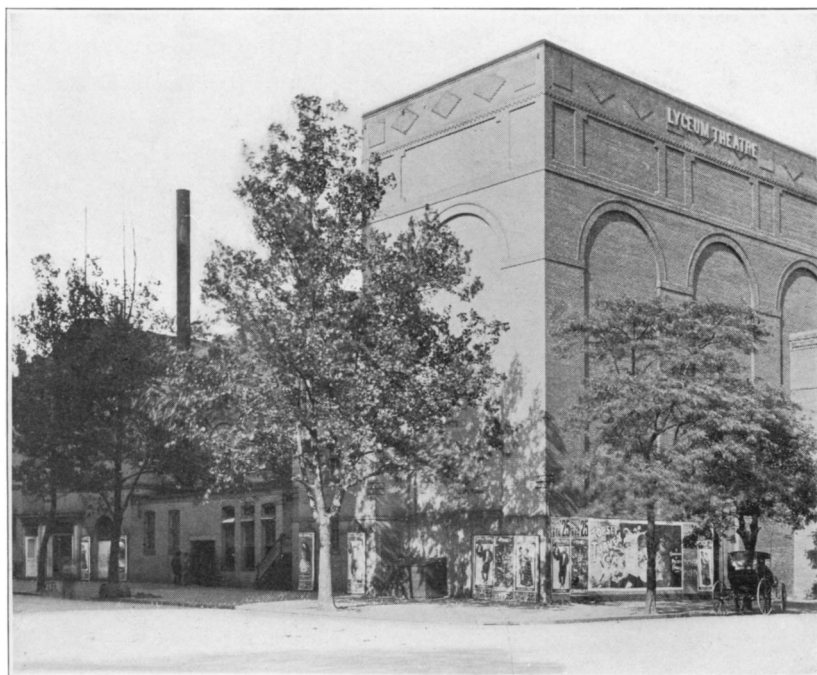
Nothing notable occurred during the administration of Dr. Gunnell. He was an affable, genial man, who gave no cause for public dissatisfaction, and who probably had no opportunity of doing anything to gain extraordinary popularity. He remained in office two years only, being succeeded on the 10th of July, 1841, by the man whom he had displaced—Dr. William Jones.

The receipts of the office during the last fiscal year of Dr. Gunnell's incumbency amounted to \$47,885.40. His salary remained as it was during the administration of his predecessor, and the force of the office was substantially unchanged.

The first opportunity that was given to Dr. Jones after he had got fairly installed the second time, to remove the post-office from the place selected by his predecessor, he took advantage of, as is shown by the following notice in the *National Intelligencer* of September 30, 1841:

The city post office has been removed from the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Twelfth Street to the large rooms under Carusi's Saloon at the corner of C Street north and Eleventh Street west. Applications for letters and newspapers will be made at the west entrance, on Eleventh Street.

WM. JONES, *Postmaster.*



CARUSI'S SALOON.

Used as Post Office of Washington City, 1841 to 1843.



The building—Carusi's Saloon—to which the post-office was taken, is still standing, though sadly altered. It is now known as Kernan's or the Lyceum Theatre. It was not a saloon in the sense in which that word is now commonly used, but a place of entertainment, to which, throughout its whole use as such, some of the most fashionable and distinguished ladies and gentlemen, not only of the capital city, but of the whole nation, were wont to go. Carusi's, indeed, was one of the great institutions of the federal city.

The post-office did not remain there long. On the 23d of September, 1843, as is seen in the following notice published in the *National Intelligencer*, it was removed to two brick buildings on Seventh Street, between E and F Streets, contiguous to the General Post-Office:

The city post office has been removed to Seventh Street west, immediately north of the General Post Office.

WM. JONES, *Postmaster*.

These buildings were part of several purchased by the government with a view to the ultimate enlargement of the Post-Office Department. They were torn down in 1857, to give place to the new structure; but they ought, if possible, to have been preserved, for in one of them, on the upper floor, was established the first office in the world for the receipt and dispatch of messages by that wonderful invention, the magnetic telegraph. It has been recently suggested by Mr. Geo. C. Maynard, one of our best known electricians, that this historic fact ought to be commemorated by a bronze tablet or some other suitable device in the corridor of the present building over the spot where the old house stood.

Dr. Jones did not leave Carusi's without a row with its proprietors, which led to interesting correspondence,

here given, in which the postmaster, the Messrs. Carusi, and their attorney, the celebrated Amos Kendall, figured:

WASHINGTON, November 7th, 1843.

HON. C. A. WICKLIFFE, Postmaster General.

*Sir:* At the request of the Messrs. Carusi, I called at the Post-Office Department to present the enclosed; but learning that you were at the cabinet, and having little to say, I adopt this method to save your own time and my own.

Messrs. Carusi state the law correctly, as I have had occasion to know by experience. But you will perceive they do not insist on their legal rights if the department will make the repairs a private citizen would under such circumstances be bound to make. As soon as that is done, they are willing to terminate the lease. There is a liberality in this proposition which recommends it to immediate acceptance.

If you should accede to the general proposition, I should be happy to be apprised of it, having a further proposition to make as to the details of repairs.

With high consideration, your obedient servant,

AMOS KENDALL,  
For A. & J. E. KENDALL.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6, 1843.

HON. C. A. WICKLIFFE, Postmaster General.

*Sir:* We enclose you a copy of the agreement entered into by us with the postmaster of this city on renting to him the lower apartment of our saloon for a post-office.

By the laws of this district it is not in the power of a lessee to terminate a lease of this kind without six months' notice; yet without giving such notice, the postmaster has abandoned our premises. Not only so, but he has left the apartments occupied by him in a condition not to be occupied by us without extensive repairs.

The government in dealing with private citizens ought to be, and we believe generally is, regulated by the same laws which govern individuals; and we ask and expect no more at its hands than we could enforce if a private citizen had been our lessee. Governed by this rule, we hold the Post-Office Department bound for another year's rent of our apartments, then to be restored to us in good order.

But desiring to occupy the apartments ourselves, and not wishing to subject the department to unnecessary expense,

we are willing to terminate the rent upon receiving possession of our premises put in a state of complete repair.

Not doubting that you will at once recognize not only the legality but the strict justice of our claim to another year's rent and a thorough repair of our apartments at its close, we trust you will see a liberality in our willingness to terminate the rent at an earlier period which will induce you to accede at once to our proposition, and proceed to arrange with us the details for carrying it into effect.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

L. CARUSI,  
For N. and L. CARUSI.

I have rented from Nathaniel and Louis Carusi the lower part of their saloon and premises on Eleventh and C Streets for the yearly sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars, payable quarterly, one hundred dollars of which, out of the first sum, is to be appropriated to fitting up the premises. The proprietors, N. and L. Carusi, reserve the upper parts of the saloon and premises for their own purposes, and are entitled to and are to have free access thereto at all times by the southern door—the said upper rooms to be used, as heretofore, for balls, concerts, and parties. The rent to commence as soon as I get possession.

WM. JONES, *Postmaster.*

Sept. 22, 1841.

POST OFFICE, WASHINGTON CITY, D. C., Nov. 8, 1843.  
HON. C. A. WICKLIFFE, Postmaster General.

*Sir:* The letter of Messrs. A. & J. E. Kendall, on behalf of Messrs. N. and L. Carusi, of yesterday's date, referred to me by you, has been perused, and is herewith returned.

Upon the claim of Messrs. Carusi I respectfully report: That when their rooms were rented by me, with the approbation of the Postmaster General, for the use and accommodation of this office, it was distinctly though verbally understood by Mr. Morfit, the agent of the Messrs. Carusi, and me, that the rooms were to be occupied by the post-office until some "public" building should be provided for it, AND NO LONGER; that so soon as you informed me that you were about to have the buildings recently purchased by the United States on the square on which the General Post-Office stands prepared for the accommodation of the post-office, I deemed it proper, though under no obligation to do so, to notify the

Messrs. Carusi that I should vacate their rooms on or before the 1st of October then next ensuing, and that said notification was made more than three months before the said 1st of October; and that at the time of so notifying the Messrs. Carusi, through Mr. Louis Carusi, no objection whatever was expressed on account of the shortness of the notice, although he expressed his regret that we could not retain his premises permanently.

When I vacated the building, I had the rooms well scoured and cleaned, and directed Mr. Towles, a respectable master builder, to make a careful survey of the premises, and report his opinion as to what repairs ought to be made to restore the apartments to as good a condition as when taken possession of by the office. Mr. Towles reported that nothing appeared to be necessary but to apply one-half of a pair of folding doors, which for the convenience of the office had been cut into two parts. This I offered to have done, but Mr. Carusi refused to accept it. Mr. Towles reports that no other damage has been sustained by the premises than what may be included under the character of "reasonable wear and tear."

It is only necessary to say further that on the 30th of September last the key of the premises was tendered by me, through a competent witness, to Mr. Louis Carusi, which he refused to receive, and that he has to this day failed to specify the damage sustained by his rooms, or the kind or description of repairs required by him.

With very great respect, your obedient servant,

WM. JONES, *Postmaster.*

I think that most persons reading these letters will decide that the postmaster was in the wrong; but he certainly made the best of a bad case.

After Dr. Jones went into office in 1841 its receipts for the first year amounted to \$47,885.40; when he went out in 1845, they had slightly decreased, being only \$47,130.20. This was due, however, not to a lack of public patronage, but to a great reduction in the rates of postage. The population of the city had increased to nearly 40,000.

On the 31st of March, 1845, Dr. Jones was a second time removed from the office of postmaster by a Demo-

cratic President, and Col. Charles K. Gardner, a very distinguished man—one of the heroes of the War of 1812—was appointed to succeed him.

Charles K. Gardner was born in Morris County, New Jersey, in 1787, and in 1791 removed with his parents to Newburg on the Hudson, where he began and finished his education. He was a student of medicine with Dr. Hosack in New York in 1808, when he received the appointment of ensign in the old Sixth Regiment of Infantry of the regular army. In the following year, while on duty at Oswego, he was appointed adjutant of his regiment, and he served as such at various points. At Baton Rouge, Louisiana, General Wade Hampton appointed him his brigade inspector. In July, 1812, he was appointed captain of the Third Artillery, and in the following month General Armstrong, then in command at New York, made him his brigade inspector. In March, 1813, he was in charge of the Adjutant-General's Office at Washington as assistant, but was soon after promoted to be major of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, and ordered to the northern frontier at Sackett's Harbor. He was in the battle of Chrysler's Field. In the following spring he accompanied General Brown's division first from French's Mills to Sackett's Harbor, and then to Buffalo, and in April received the appointment of Adjutant-General with the rank of colonel. For distinguished services on the Niagara frontier he was brevetted lieutenant-colonel, but being then colonel, he declined the honor. In May, 1816, he was recommissioned Adjutant-General of the Army of the North, and in 1818 he married and resigned. In 1822-23 he edited the New York *Patriot*, and was appointed corresponding clerk in the Post-Office Department. In 1829 he became Assistant Postmaster-General, in 1836 Auditor for the Post-Office De-

partment, and still later Surveyor-General of Oregon. In 1845, as above stated, President Polk appointed him postmaster of Washington, the salary of the office still being, as it had been for many years, only \$2,000 a year. Colonel Gardner was a distinguished author also, having written an admirable "Compend of Infantry Tactics" and a very comprehensive "Dictionary of the Army." He died in 1868, and is buried in the Congressional Cemetery at Washington. He was an amiable and courteous gentleman, and was uniformly successful throughout life. No matter what happened, Colonel Gardner was on top, or near it. He illustrated the old Arab proverb, "Throw a lucky man into the Nile, and he will come up with a fish in his mouth."

In a postal sense, nothing occurred during the administration of Colonel Gardner that is worthy of special mention. He was an upright, straightforward man, and therefore kept himself free from censure by the Post-Office Department, as well as from the adverse criticism of the people. He was also a popular man, and did whatever was right to accommodate and please the public. The post-office remained in the rooms on Seventh Street, between E and F, though the postal business had increased to such an extent as to render them cramped and unsatisfactory. The gross revenue during the last year of Colonel Gardner's incumbency was \$59,730.18. His salary remained throughout his term \$2,000 a year, though his receipts from box rents no doubt carried it up to \$3,000 or more. It was during Colonel Gardner's administration that postage stamps—now indispensable—first came into general use, although prepayment of postage was still optional.

In 1847 and 1849 we find the following named persons to have been in office:



COL. CHARLES K. GARDNER,  
POSTMASTER OF WASHINGTON CITY,  
1845 TO 1849.

J. E. Kendall, Asst. P. M.,  
Lambert Tree,  
James A. Kennedy,  
Richard Say,  
M. Brooke Jones,  
Thos. L. Noyes,  
Cornelius Cox,  
Michael P. Callan,  
Samuel Crown,  
Josiah W. Hicks,  
J. B. Iardella,

J. T. C. Clark,  
R. H. Brown,  
F. J. Bartlett,  
J. W. Davis,  
J. McLean Gardner,  
C. T. Gardner,  
Wm. T. Jones,  
Josiah Goodrich,  
John H. Tucker,  
Patrick Sweeney,  
Johnson Simonds.

Colonel Gardner's residence was on Capitol Hill.

On the 28th of June, 1849, during the presidency of Zachary Taylor, Colonel Gardner was removed from the office of postmaster—politics being the reason—and William A. Bradley was appointed in his stead.

Mr. Bradley was born in Connecticut, February 25, 1794, and came to this city with his father, Dr. Phineas Bradley, in 1801. The latter purchased in 1809 a tract of land northeast of the city—which is now Glenwood Cemetery—and there lived for nearly half a generation. The old homestead is still standing in the northeast corner of the cemetery tract.

William A. Bradley commenced active life as runner for the Bank of Washington, and as long as he held that position rode horseback daily to and from his father's farm to the bank. From this position he was promoted step by step, until he finally became president of the bank. He was also subsequently president of the Patriotic Bank, which stood at the corner of 7th and D Streets—now occupied by the Lincoln National Bank. He was director in the Franklin Insurance Company from the time of its organization in 1818, and was president of that company at the time of his death. He was for one term mayor of Washington, and filled the office with distinguished ability and impartiality.



He was a heavy mail contractor, and at one time controlled nearly all the mail lines running south from Washington. During the presidential terms of Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore he was city postmaster. About 1835 he purchased Analostan Island—the old home of General and Mrs. Mason, who had been long prominent in the social circles of the capital, and were widely and well known for their hospitable entertainments. Mr. Bradley owned this island at the time of his death, but he had not resided there for a long time. He built the large double house on Maryland Avenue between 8th and 9th Streets S. W., now occupied by the Sisters of Charity of St. Dominic's Church, and was a resident there for many years. His house was the resort of Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and other public men of that day, and his hospitality was well known and widely enjoyed. Later he resided on Louisiana Avenue, two doors east from the building now occupied by the District government. He married Miss Sidney Ann Thruston, daughter of Judge Thruston, and four children were born to them, three of whom married, but only one had issue. (There is but one living descendant of Wm. A. Bradley—the daughter of his son Wm. A. Bradley, and wife of Lieutenant Theodore Dewey of the U. S. Navy.)

In July, 1867, Mr. Bradley went to the mountains of Pennsylvania for his health, was taken ill there, and died at Broad Top City, Huntington County, August 28, 1867, in his seventy-fourth year. He was buried in Glenwood Cemetery.

In religion Mr. Bradley was an Episcopalian. He was about five feet ten inches in height, of large and sturdy build, was usually strong and healthy, and he had a face indicative of high character and uncommon energy. He was fond of society, but in an intellectual



WILLIAM A. BRADLEY,  
POSTMASTER OF WASHINGTON CITY,  
1849 TO 1853.

rather than in a fashionable way, and was not only a good raconteur, but was exceedingly pleased to hear good stories from others.

Mr. Bradley was throughout his term a popular and efficient postmaster, though nothing noticeable occurred. He made very few changes in his force, not being disposed to turn out efficient employés, even though they might differ with him as to politics. The assistant postmaster, Mr. Kendall, retired of his own volition, and Mr. William H. Gunnell was appointed to the place. The number of employees was increased somewhat, but the postal business also grew. In 1853, when Mr. Bradley went out of office, the gross receipts had increased to over \$68,000. The salary and emoluments of the postmaster amounted to about \$3,000 a year. No change occurred in the location of the post-office.

A little over two months after the beginning of the presidency of Franklin Pierce—namely, on the 27th of May, 1853—Mr. Bradley was removed as a Whig, and Colonel James G. Berret, a Democrat, succeeded him.

Mr. Berret was born February 12, 1815, in Baltimore County, Maryland. He had the advantage of only two years' education in the county schools. His father was a farmer, and the boy's services being needed on the farm, he soon became a valuable assistant. At sixteen, his father dying, he was thrown on his own resources; but he had pluck and manliness in him, and after lots of hard work and study, before he reached the age of twenty, he had become one of the best farmers in the county. He took an active interest also in public business, and when that part of the county in which he lived was created Carroll County, he was elected, though only twenty-one years of age, a member of the State legislature. In this capacity he served two terms, and

then declined a reelection. He came to Washington City in 1839, having received an appointment as clerk in the office of the Treasurer of the United States, and remained in that position until 1848, when he accepted the position of chief clerk of the Pension Bureau. This post he resigned in the following year, and went into business as a prosecutor of government claims, in which he was very successful. Three years afterwards he was made postmaster. In the Know-nothing election troubles in Washington in 1857, he was the chief adviser of the mayor, Dr. Wm. B. Magruder. In 1858 he was elected mayor of Washington, and in 1860 was a candidate for reelection against Richard Wallach, when he was again triumphant. In 1861, while still mayor, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the United States, and was consequently arrested on the 24th of August, 1861, as a Southern sympathizer or supporter, by order of the Secretary of War, and taken a prisoner to Fort Lafayette, N. Y. In September, 1861, on resigning the mayoralty, he was released, and a few days later he returned to Washington, to find that during his confinement his late competitor before the people, Mr. Wallach, had been elected by the City councils to fill the office. Colonel Berret, as he was now generally called, bore these troubles and humiliations philosophically, and remained a citizen of Washington, and was supposed to be loyal to the government. He afterwards became a personal friend of both Lincoln and Grant, the latter appointing him commissioner of police in 1873.

Colonel Berret was a man of strong convictions, and of very high character. He was always an active citizen, and a lovable and popular man; and when he died, on the 14th of April, 1901, he was sincerely mourned by the whole population of the great city he had helped

to build up and beautify. In person, Colonel Berret was tall and graceful. In his younger days he was quite handsome, and even in his extreme old age he was a very noticeable, dignified, and attractive gentleman. In religion he was a Roman Catholic.

As postmaster, Colonel Berret made no innovations. He retained most of the men who had been in office under his predecessors, and as a consequence, the business of the post-office was attended to promptly and efficiently. Mr. Lambert Tree again became the chief clerk of the office, or assistant postmaster—a position which he continued to fill under many of Colonel Berret's successors, and nearly up to the day of his death. The post-office was continued in the old location on Seventh Street during the greater part of Colonel Berret's incumbency. In 1857, however, it was transferred to the first floor rooms in the F Street front of the extension of the Post-Office Department building, which part of the structure had then been completed. When that removal was effected the old Seventh Street buildings were torn down, and the extension was finished shortly afterwards on that side also. The emoluments of the postmaster remained about the same, though the business of the office had greatly increased. In the last year of Colonel Berret's administration the gross receipts were about \$83,000.

It was during Colonel Berret's term that the old system of optional prepayment of postage was discontinued, and compulsory prepayment established. This was required by the act of Congress of March 3, 1855. The registration of letters, also, was begun under this same law.

On the 30th of March, 1858, during the presidency of James Buchanan, Dr. William Jones became postmaster for the third time, and he held the place until the break-

ing out of the civil war. In all, he filled the office about seventeen years—a far longer time than any of his predecessors had occupied it except Mr. Munroe, whose term, it will be remembered, covered a period of thirty consecutive years. The office continued to be run on the same lines as were followed by Colonel Berret, and few changes were made. The revenues of the office increased but very slightly, the last year of Dr. Jones's term—1861—showing a total of only \$85,662. Nothing noticeable occurred during this period. Dr. Jones was removed in May, 1861. His residence was on the south side of C between Third and Four-and-a-half Streets.

On the 10th of May, 1861, Lewis Clephane—a pronounced Republican, and an ardent admirer of the President, Abraham Lincoln—was appointed post-master. He was the first of Washington City's post-masters who were born within its limits.

Mr. Clephane was of a very old Scotch family—the son of James Clephane, who came to this country from Edinburgh in 1817.

Mr. Clephane was born in Washington, D. C., March 13, 1825, and was educated at "Strahan's School." In January, 1847, when he was but twenty-one years of age, Mr. Gamaliel Bailey established the *National Era* in this city—a pronounced anti-slavery paper—and Mr. Clephane went into that office, remaining there as its business manager during the entire time of its publication, and after Mr. Bailey's death, closed the affairs for Mrs. Bailey in 1860.

He was one of the founders of the Republican party, being a delegate to the Pittsburg Convention of 1856, and always most active in promoting its principles; therefore in 1860, in company with Mr. W. J. Murtagh, he established the *National Republican*, but severed his

practical connection with it when he was appointed postmaster of Washington City by President Lincoln and entered on the duties of that office. In this position his duties were especially arduous, owing to the beginning of the war, which made this the distributing office for the vast army stationed around the city—the usual amount of mail matter being suddenly quadrupled. On March 15, 1863, he resigned the postmastership to become collector of internal revenue, which office he filled till the war revenue was not needed.

Later, he was engaged in many private business enterprises, and at the time of his death, February 12, 1897, was president of the Horton Basket Company, and of the Virginia Brick Company; also director in the Second National Bank, and in the National Safe Deposit Saving and Trust Company.

He was married in 1862, and his widow, one daughter, and three sons now reside in this city.

In person Mr. Clephane was small and spare. He wore spectacles, and had the appearance of nervous intellectuality. He was somewhat reserved and cold in manner, but was really a warm-hearted man, and quite companionable and attractive to those with whom he was intimate. He was a very honorable man. One incident of many may be cited as an illustration of this. When Mr. A. M. Clapp became the managing editor and controller of the *National Republican*, Mr. Clephane still retained of his former holdings one share of the company's stock, the face value of which was \$500, and this share, it seems, was necessary to Mr. Clapp's control of the paper. The latter being naturally somewhat uneasy lest this share should get into the hands of parties antagonistic to him, Mr. Clephane voluntarily and informally assured him that the stock should never be used to his detriment. As long as Mr. Clapp was

connected with the company, this promise was faithfully kept, although offers of \$1,000, then of \$2,000, then \$3,000, and finally of \$5,000, were made to Mr. Clephane for it. Ultimately, after Mr. Clapp had of his own volition given up the control of the paper, the stock was sold by Mr. Clephane for less than its par value.

The gross revenues of the post-office during Mr. Clephane's term increased enormously. During the last year of it—the year ending June 30, 1863—they amounted to nearly \$306,000.

Upon the resignation of Lewis Clephane as post-master, Sayles J. Bowen, who had been a resident of Washington for about eighteen years, succeeded him, the date of the appointment being March 16, 1863. He was born in the township of Scipio, Cayuga County, New York, October 7, 1813, and died in Washington City, December 16, 1896, in his eighty-fourth year. His parents were from Massachusetts, and were among the first settlers in Cayuga County. He assisted his father in the labors of the farm, received a good education in Aurora Academy, and taught school from the age of seventeen during the winter months. From 1838 until 1842 he was engaged in mercantile pursuits, after which he removed south, and in 1845, during the administration of James K. Polk, he was appointed to a clerkship in the Treasury Department. From this place he was removed in 1848, when he went into the business of prosecuting claims against the government, in which he was unusually successful. From 1856 to 1860 he was in politics, supporting the Republican party, and on the election of Abraham Lincoln was taken into his confidence. In 1861 he was appointed commissioner of police for the District of Columbia—a place then of great responsibility—and in the same year was made



disbursing officer of the Senate. In 1862 he became collector of internal revenue for the district, and he held this post until March 16, 1863, when, as above stated, he received the appointment of postmaster. During the war all the mails for the Army of the Potomac originated at or were distributed through the Washington office, increasing enormously its duties and responsibilities; yet during Mr. Bowen's administration everything was done by him efficiently and faithfully, and to the satisfaction of the government and the public. He remained postmaster until July, 1868, when he resigned, to become the mayor of Washington, to which office he had been elected by popular vote.

In 1870, running again for the office of mayor, he was defeated, after which he ceased to hold any public place of prominence. In his extreme old age, he was somewhat straitened in his means, so much so that he was compelled to seek an humble situation in the department where he had first become publicly known. He was a great friend of the colored people, advocating the establishment of schools for their education, and spending \$20,000 of his own money for their support. He was also the friend of the poor and unfortunate of all races, and aided them in every way possible. Mr. Bowen was a man of temperate and excellent habits, true in his friendships, and faithful to duty. In the several positions held by him he disbursed many millions of government money, yet not a dollar was misappropriated, or failed of being legally and justly accounted for. In religion he was a Unitarian. He was married July 2, 1835, to Miss Mary Barker, daughter of John A. Barker, of Venice, Cayuga County, N. Y., a lady of very estimable character, who died June 2, 1882. Two years afterwards—May 27, 1884—he was married to Mrs. Bessie Bentley, of Morristown, New Jersey.

He left no children by either wife. He was rather tall and well built, of a mild and benevolent aspect, was slow in all his motions, guarded and deliberate in speech, and very strong and pertinacious in his convictions. During part of his public career he was quite unpopular, but, taken in its entirety, his life was that of an upright, conscientious man, who gained and deserved the favorable regard of his countrymen.

During the entire term of Mr. Bowen as postmaster the office remained in the Post-Office Department building, on the F Street side. The revenue was not nearly so great as during Mr. Clephane's incumbency, the receipts for 1868, the last year of his term, being slightly over \$111,000.

Three very great changes in the postal system, bringing about the most advantageous results to the public, occurred during this time. The first was the abandonment of the old penny-post system, which had existed from colonial times, and the substitution of the free-delivery system, by act of Congress of March 3, 1863, under which uniformed letter-carriers, getting a regular salary from the government, are required to make delivery of mail matter, and to collect from established boxes throughout the city, without direct charge to the patrons of the post-office. The second change was the introduction of the money-order system, in November, 1864, under the act of Congress of May 17 of that year—a system whose business has grown throughout the country from about four million dollars of issued orders in 1865 to nearly three hundred and thirty-seven million in the present year, and which extends to nearly all the countries of the world. The third change was the introduction of what is called the return-request system, under which the sender of a letter, by a designated form of request made upon it, may have it re-

turned to him free of charge in any prescribed time, in case of its non-delivery. These several changes, it need not be told, added very largely to the work of the office.

Upon the resignation of Sayles J. Bowen, Colonel Charles M. Alexander was appointed, his term beginning July 27, 1868. He held the office less than one year, being succeeded on the 12th of May, 1869, by James M. Edmunds. He was appointed as a friend of the President, Andrew Johnson, and was removed, purely for political reasons, when Johnson's administration ended.

Charles Madison Alexander was born in Woodford County, Kentucky, on the 8th of November, 1832. He was descended both paternally and maternally from a long line of distinguished ancestors, being of Scotch and French origin on his father's side, and of English and Welsh on that of his mother. After completing his studies at Marietta College, Ohio, he came to Washington—in 1856—and at once engaged in the practice of patent law, in which business he continued until 1861. Though a southern man by birth and social affiliations, he was loyal to the Union, and enthusiastically in favor of maintaining it; so that when President Lincoln made his first call for troops, he promptly responded by enlisting in the old National Rifles of Washington. When his term of service in that organization expired, he assisted in forming the Second Regiment of Infantry of the District of Columbia, and was commissioned major of it. His soldierly qualities were so highly esteemed that in a few months he was promoted to the colonelcy of the regiment, and in that position served about three years, part of the time as brigade commander in Virginia. When the war was over he again entered into practice as a patent attorney

in Washington, and soon achieved prominence and success; but he relinquished his business a second time upon being appointed postmaster in 1868. Upon his retirement from that office he again returned to his practice, and continued in it until his death, which occurred on the 27th of January, 1891. He is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, Washington, D. C.

Colonel Alexander was married in 1855 to Miss Eliza H. Dow, of New Albany, Ind., great niece of Judge John McLean, a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and had by her four children. She, together with two of the children—a son and daughter—is still living. His appearance was such as always commanded attention. He was over six feet in height, very erect, graceful in his movements, and martial in his bearing. He had a long, flowing blonde beard, comely features, pale skin and blue eyes. While vigorous and energetic, he was refined and amiable, and quite attractive to women, men and children.

As postmaster Colonel Alexander was efficient and popular. The most notable thing he did, perhaps, was his increasing the pay of nearly all the clerks in the post-office, and that, too, without first obtaining the authority of the Post-Office Department—an act that was unquestionably right, and that received the ultimate sanction of his superiors. The receipts of the office during the year of his term amounted to \$115,000.

On the 27th of July, 1868, upon the retirement of Colonel Alexander, Mr. James M. Edmunds—generally known as Judge Edmunds—was appointed postmaster. He was born in Niagara County, New York, August 23, 1810, where he received a good common school and academical education. His family, both on the father's and the mother's side, were from New England. His boyhood was spent on his father's farm. At the age

of sixteen he became a country school teacher, which occupation he followed until 1831, when he accompanied his father, Robert Edmunds, to Michigan, becoming a merchant in the village of Ypsilanti. He took a great interest in the educational facilities of that place, and for ten years was an inspector of schools. He also held a number of other municipal offices. In 1839 he was elected to the State senate of Michigan, and in 1846 to the lower house of the legislature. In 1847 he was the Whig candidate for governor, but was not elected, and in 1851 he was a member of the constitutional convention, where he rendered valuable services to the State. In 1853 he removed to Detroit, and entered extensively into the lumbering business, extending his operations to Saginaw and Tuscola Counties. From 1857 to 1861 he was comptroller of Detroit, which office he gave up to become Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington. Resigning that position in 1866, he was chosen postmaster of the United States Senate, which in turn he relinquished in May, 1869, to become postmaster of the city of Washington, which position he held until his death. From 1855 to 1861 he was chairman of the Republican State Central Committee of Michigan. In Washington he was president of the Michigan Soldiers' Relief Association from its organization in 1861, and he was also president of the National Council of the Union League of America from its inception in 1862 to the year 1869, when he retired. For the last two or three years of his life he suffered much from ill health, and his death, which occurred on the 14th of December, 1879, was attended with great anguish and suffering. Judge Edmunds was a man of great intellectual strength; he was, however, more of what people generally call a man of good "horse" sense. He was a silent, rather reserved man,

evidently behaving in conformity with the French proverb, "Speak little and well if you wish to be esteemed a man of merit." He was the intimate friend of Lincoln, Grant and other great men of his day, and in the dark days of the Civil War, through his wise counsel, great influence and active coöperation with the national administration, he rendered invaluable services to the country. Senator Zachariah Chandler, of Michigan, who was one of his closest friends, regarded him, in politics and in statecraft, as one of the foremost men of his day. He was six feet in height, stooped slightly, was homely in face and rather ungainly in form, appearing more like a plain, practical backwoodsman or farmer than a man of affairs; and though he was the valued associate of many of the nation's rulers, and knew how to deport himself well in the company of scholars and statesmen, he always appeared to be somewhat ill at ease and to love retirement. He spent much of his time during his later years upon his farm in Fairfax County, Virginia, near Gunston, the home of the celebrated George Mason. In honor, friendship, truth, and fidelity to public duty he was absolutely without blemish.

Judge Edmunds's administration of the office of postmaster was exceedingly popular and successful, the annual revenues increasing in that time nearly threefold. In 1869 the gross receipts amounted to about \$115,000; in the fiscal year 1880, half of which was in his term, they amounted to over \$320,000.

The office remained during almost the whole of Judge Edmunds's administration in the F Street side of the Post-Office Department building. In November, 1879, about a month before he died, and while he was on his death-bed, it was removed to a building known as the Seaton House, originally used as a hotel, situated on

the south side of Louisiana Avenue between Sixth and Seventh Streets. It is now occupied by the Central Union Mission. This building was probably the least adapted to post-office work of any that has ever been used. It was not only inconvenient to the public, but it was wretchedly arranged for the duties of the employés, and badly ventilated. To add to its unsatisfactory condition, the Post-Office Department chose to make it a storehouse for mail-bags, which in a few months began to mildew and rot in the cellars where they were stored, and this rendered the whole building foul and unsanitary.

The letter-carrier system increased very greatly under Judge Edmunds; so did the the money-order and registry business. The salary of the postmaster was \$4,000, without any additional emoluments. The assistant postmaster was for many years Lambert Tree; afterwards, Lewis Porter, a Michigan man, became assistant.

Shortly after the death of Judge Edmunds—namely, on the 8th of January, 1880—Daniel B. Ainger, of Michigan, was appointed postmaster by President Hayes—Judge David M. Key, of Tennessee, being at the time Postmaster-General.

He was born in Bellevue, O., March 8, 1844, and received an excellent education in the common schools of that place. Before he was of age he entered the Union army, and served with honorable distinction until the close of the war. When mustered out he went into business in Michigan, and achieved success in it, acquiring, among other things, a very wide and favorable acquaintanceship. After his appointment as postmaster of Washington he served nearly three years, when he again entered the walks of business life. He has since held the position of banking commissioner of

Michigan, of deputy auditor-general of the same State, and of receiver of the First National Bank of Benton Harbor, Mich., in which position he won the unusual and enjoyable distinction of returning to the depositors of the bank one hundred cents on the dollar for their deposits. Colonel Ainger is now vice-president and treasurer of the Federal Life Insurance Company of Chicago, which institution he actively assisted in organizing. He stands very high socially, is a Knight Templar, and has a wide fellowship in the Masonic orders. His administration of the office of postmaster of Washington was marked by energy, impartiality, and absolute integrity, and these same high qualities have characterized him in every position he has held. He is a man of warm heart, cool head, and excellent judgment. He is not a dreamer or a theorist. He practically illustrates the saying of Thomas Carlyle: "Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." He is somewhat above medium size, strongly built, graceful, with a well-poised head on broad shoulders and a face of great firmness and determination.

Colonel Ainger's assistant postmaster was also a man of exceptional ability—still one of Washington's most respected and talented citizens—Colonel Myron M. Parker.

During Colonel Ainger's administration the post-office remained in the Seaton Building—on Louisiana Avenue, between Sixth and Seventh streets.

The salary of the postmaster was \$4,000 per annum.

Upon the retirement of Colonel Ainger, Thomas L. Tullock, who for a number of years had been the financial clerk of the office, became postmaster, his commission as such being dated November 25, 1882.



He was a citizen of New Hampshire, having been born there, in the city of Manchester, in 1820. At one time he was Secretary of State of New Hampshire, and in 1872 was secretary of the Republican Congressional Committee, in each of which positions he was faithful and conscientious. After his appointment as postmaster, he labored with great zeal in preparing for certain reforms he contemplated in the management of the post-office—not infrequently devoting fourteen or fifteen hours a day to his work. This is supposed to have injured his health. At any rate, he was soon compelled to give up the care of the office to other hands, and to seek restoration to strength in another climate. He first went south—to North Carolina—but realizing no benefit from a residence there, he came north, and staid for some months in Atlantic City, where he died on the 20th of June, 1883, aged sixty-three years, having held the position of postmaster only seven months.

Mr. Tullock was a very honorable man, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a prominent Mason. He was also a successful business man, and before he became postmaster had acquired a considerable estate. He had no opportunity to do anything for the betterment of the city's postal service; but the public respected him, and the employés of the office without exception loved him, so that his death was almost universally deplored.

The post-office remained in the Seaton Building during Mr. Tullock's term.

After the death of Mr. Tullock—Frank B. Conger, of Michigan, became postmaster, his appointment being dated June 29, 1883. He had been assistant postmaster under Mr. Tullock, having resigned the position of business manager of the *Washington National Re-*

*publican* to take it. He was the youngest man who ever filled the office of postmaster of the city.

Mr. Conger was born in Port Huron, Mich., May 11, 1851. He is one of the sons of Omar D. Conger, who ably represented one of the districts of Michigan in the National House of Representatives for ten or twelve years, and who afterwards became one of its Senators. Mr. Conger received his education in the common schools. His first public employment was as clerk of the Committee of Commerce of the House of Representatives, of which his father was chairman, in the Forty-second and Forty-third Congresses. He married the daughter of S. P. Brown, a prominent citizen of Washington City, and has had five children. He is still living.

Mr. Conger is a man of great energy and ability, and absolutely fearless of public criticism. As postmaster he was a strict disciplinarian, but was very just. Every man received under him fair treatment. During the whole of Mr. Conger's term the post-office remained in the Seaton Building.

By a contract, made five years after the occupancy of the building began, between the owners and Postmaster-General John Wanamaker, the rental was fixed at \$8,000 a year.

During Mr. Conger's time the salary of the postmaster was, by act of Congress approved March 3, 1883, increased to \$5,000 a year. The assistant postmaster was Henry Sherwood.

For the year ending June 30, 1884, the first fiscal year of Mr. Conger's term, the gross receipts of the office amounted to \$444,496. For the year ending June 30, 1887, his last full year, they amounted to only about \$332,000. This falling off was due mainly to the reduction in the letter rate of postage from three to two

cents, which under the provisions of the act of Congress of March 3, 1883, went into operation on the 1st of October of that year.

During Mr. Conger's term the special-delivery system, by which letters specially paid for and stamped are immediately delivered upon arrival at the office of destination, by messengers employed for the purpose, was put into effect.

On the 30th of January, 1888, John W. Ross, of Illinois, was appointed postmaster, Grover Cleveland being President of the United States, and Don M. Dickinson Postmaster-General.

Mr. Ross was born on the 23d of June, 1841, at Lewiston, Fulton County, Illinois, a village that was founded in 1821 by his grandfather, Ossian M. Ross, of New York, a soldier of the War of 1812. His father was Lewis W. Ross, a native of Seneca Falls, N. Y., who came to Illinois as a boy when the village of Lewiston was founded. He was a prominent lawyer, a delegate to the Illinois legislature for two terms, and a member of Congress from 1863 to 1869.

Up to 1856 Mr. Ross's education had been obtained in the private schools in Lewiston; he then went to Illinois College, and remained there until 1862, after which he attended the Harvard Law School, and was admitted to the bar of Illinois in January, 1866. He at once entered upon the practice of his profession in Lewiston, and had been thus engaged but two years, when he was elected as a Democrat to the State legislature. In 1870 he was again elected, but after serving out his term he decided to come east. In 1873 he established himself as a lawyer in Washington, and soon became one of its leading practitioners. In 1883 he became one of the lecturers in Georgetown University, and was afterwards honored with the degree of LL.D.

In 1886 he became a member of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools. On the 30th of January, 1888, he became postmaster of Washington, and held the office until the 12th of September, 1890, when he resigned to accept the position of commissioner of the District of Columbia, which he held until his death, on the 29th of July, 1902.

At the time of his death Mr. Ross was probably the best known and most popular man in the District of Columbia. He was in every respect a gentleman—polite, considerate, dignified, handsome, intelligent, and sweet-tempered. He thoroughly exemplified the dictum of Emerson: "Repose and cheerfulness are the badge of the gentleman." He possessed such suavity of manner, and such a sympathy with the feelings of people who approached him, that he appeared to be everybody's friend; and though he could refuse his favor and deny requests that were made upon him, he did it in such a way that he never gave offence. He was a man, too, of very pronounced ability.

During the whole of Mr. Ross's administration as postmaster, the post-office was kept in the Seaton building, much to the disgust of both post-office employees and the public.

For the fiscal year 1888, the first of Mr. Ross's term, the gross receipts were \$352,045. In 1890—his last year—they had increased to \$442,921.

The salary of the postmaster was \$5,000.

When Mr. Ross resigned the position of postmaster he was succeeded, September 12, 1890, by Henry Sherwood, of Michigan, who had been assistant postmaster for seven years, Benjamin Harrison being President of the United States, and John Wanamaker Postmaster-General. He was born in Avon, Livingston County, New York, on the 2d of February, 1844, and was given

a common school education. In 1860 he went to Michigan, and remained there until shortly after the breaking out of the Civil War. Up to this time his life had been spent upon the farm of his parents. In 1862 he went into the army, serving in the famous Fourth Michigan Cavalry until 1865, when he was honorably discharged on account of a gunshot wound, received in the battle of Latimer's Mills, near Kenesaw, Georgia, which resulted in the amputation of his left leg. In December, 1865, he left the hospital and came to Washington, where, on the recommendation of Senator Zach. Chandler, he was appointed to a clerkship in the War Department. In 1868 he returned to Michigan, and upon the assembling of the Fortieth Congress was appointed an assistant doorkeeper in the House of Representatives. In the Forty-third and Forty-seventh Congresses—in 1872 and 1880—he was elected postmaster of the House of Representatives, and on the 1st of August, 1883, was appointed assistant postmaster of the City of Washington, serving in that position acceptably under the terms of Frank B. Conger and John W. Ross. In September, 1890, as before stated, he was appointed postmaster, and served until he was removed, for political reasons, in October, 1894, during the second presidential term of Grover Cleveland. After his removal from office, Captain Sherwood went back to Michigan, where he was engaged in farming and politics. In 1899 he came again to Washington, and is now holding a clerical position in the office of the Third Assistant Postmaster-General. He married Miss Mary Ellen Harvey, of Washington, D. C., in May, 1882, and has had two children—a son and daughter—both of age and now living. He is about five feet nine inches in height, is a strong, able-bodied man, of sturdy build, has a pleasing countenance, and is prob-

ably one of the most even-tempered men in the world: nothing disturbs his equanimity and self-containment. If he does not really believe, he seems to act upon, the theory of Plato, the philosopher, that "nothing in the affairs of mankind is worth serious anxiety." He usually walks with an artificial leg, although occasionally he is compelled to use crutches. He is not a member of any church, but his affiliations have generally been with the Methodists and Presbyterians. In his moral character he is above reproach.

As assistant postmaster under Mr. Ross, Captain Sherwood did much to inaugurate and foster the postal stations of the city, and as postmaster he had them greatly extended.

The first official act of Postmaster Sherwood was to appoint as assistant postmaster Captain S. E. Merrill—a veteran of the Civil War, an efficient and experienced postal officer, and a gentleman. Later on he did a number of things creditable to his administration, and calculated to better the service.

Among other things, he urged the removal of the post-office from the Seaton building, which had been occupied for about eleven years before he became postmaster, and it was at his suggestion that the Union building was erected, on G between Sixth and Seventh Streets, into which the office was moved in 1892, and where it remained during the rest of his term of office.

The rental of this new building—the first two floors and half of the basement only being occupied by the post-office—was at first \$16,000 a year, the government furnishing the elevator service and the heat; afterwards it was increased to \$22,500 a year, the proprietors of the building furnishing the heat and elevator service. The accommodations here were very good, although the business of the office soon required more commodious quarters.

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1891, the first full year of Captain Sherwood's incumbency, the gross revenue of the office was \$502,569. For the year ending June 30, 1884, his last full year, it was \$555,492.

Promptly at the close of Captain Sherwood's four-year term as postmaster—namely on the 30th of October, 1894—Mr. James Polk Willett was appointed as a Democrat to succeed him—Grover Cleveland being President of the United States for the second time, and Wilson S. Bissell being Postmaster-General.

Mr. Willett got a portion of his name from a peculiar circumstance. He was born on the 27th of November, 1844, just as a Democratic procession, on its way to the city hall to celebrate the election of James K. Polk as President of the United States, was passing his father's house. He was named, therefore, James Polk Willett, and so his career as a Democrat began before he was put in his cradle. His father was Voltaire Willett, a prominent dealer in live stock in Washington, in which business he amassed a considerable fortune. He attended the Washington schools until the year 1861, when he left for Charlotte Hall, St. Mary's County, Md., where he finished his education. He afterwards engaged in mercantile pursuits, in 1871 being associated with William D. Ruoff in the hat business under the firm name of Willett & Ruoff. In 1872 he married Miss Laura A. Welsh, daughter of one of the well-known millers of Georgetown, D. C., by whom he had four sons and a daughter, all of whom, with their mother, are still living. On the 30th of October, 1894, Mr. Willett was appointed postmaster of Washington, and this office he held until the 30th of June, 1899. His death was very tragical. He fell from the 4th floor of the post-office building into the shaft of one of the elevators, and was almost instantly killed.

Mr. Willett was an easy-going, even-tempered man, who philosophically met the troubles and worries of life, and managed, even under adverse circumstances, to have a generally good time. He had many friends, who sincerely mourned his sad taking off, and very few enemies. He was a prominent Mason, and was at the time of his death secretary and treasurer of the Woodmont Gun and Rod Club.

In appearance Mr. Willett was a handsome man, about five feet nine inches in height, always well dressed, and with a quick, active step. He was not a member of any church, but affiliated with the Episcopalians.

As postmaster Mr. Willett made no innovation upon the existing order of things. He found the office well managed, and he was content to have it kept so, without experimenting with new things or new men.

One event occurred which is quite notable. The post-office was removed from the Union building on G Street between Sixth and Seventh, which it had been occupying for six years, to the new government building on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets, where it still is.

The gross revenue of the office in the first fiscal year of Mr. Willett's term, ending June 30, 1895, was \$563,532; in his last year, ending June 30, 1899, it was \$661,156. His compensation, under the act of March 3, 1883, was \$5,000 a year, though, under the general law applying to all other offices, it should have been \$6,000.

On the 29th of May, 1899, John A. Merritt, of Lockport, N. Y., was commissioned postmaster to succeed Mr. Willett, but he did not enter upon the duties of the office until the first of July following. This was in order to allow Mr. Willett to finish the quarter's business, which, by reason of Cuban and Porto Rican postal



affairs—previously, under the policy of the government, connected with the administration of the Washington City post-office—was in a somewhat complicated condition. Mr. Merritt was born in Tecumseh, Mich., November 24, 1851, where he remained until he was eight years old, when his parents moved to Lockport, N. Y. Here he received a common school education, and upon reaching manhood became engaged in mercantile and other business pursuits. In 1880, after studying law for three years, he was admitted to practice as an attorney before the courts of the state of New York, and soon after formed a law partnership with N. A. Bradley, which still exists. In 1875, being then only twenty-four years of age, he was the Republican nominee for sheriff of Niagara County, and though failing of election, received a vote which indicated great personal popularity. In 1880 he was more fortunate in his political aspirations, having been elected by a large majority county clerk of Niagara County for three years, to which office he was reëlected in 1883. In 1890 he was appointed by President Harrison postmaster of Lockport, and held the office for four years. He has been a member of the Board of Education of that city for eleven years, and for five years has been its president. In 1897 he was appointed by President McKinley Third Assistant Postmaster-General, which position he resigned on the 30th of June, 1899, to become postmaster of the City of Washington. He is an active man of business, being interested in a number of manufacturing enterprises, and is now secretary and treasurer of the New York Paper Mills. He was married in 1876 to Miss Seraph Hyde, of Lockport, who is yet living, and he has one son. Besides being a business man, he has devoted much of his life to politics, both local and national, and he has

the reputation of being one of the most astute and upright leaders of his party in the state of New York. He is a gentleman of very pleasing address, of amiable character, and of such an obliging temper that his inclinations are always to do a good turn to his fellow men wherever that is practicable; yet he does not allow this to lead him astray, and he has rather an unusual amount of firmness and courage tempered by sound discretion and practical common sense.

The business of the post-office has greatly increased since he took charge of it, and it is now, owing to his vigilant oversight and to improved methods of business, in a very satisfactory condition. A few items of its affairs, from many that might be cited, will serve to show this.

The number of mails dispatched by the office to other places is 68 a day; the number received is 76. The number of dispatches between the office and its stations is 122 a day. The number of daily separations comprehended in all these receipts and dispatches is over 500. This is a very large business, and yet the number of material errors made in transacting it is comparatively small.

The local delivery service has grown to very large proportions, so that practically the entire District of Columbia is now served by letter-carriers, whose duties are rendered with promptitude and correctness.

The gross postal revenue has also greatly advanced, being now nearly \$900,000 a year. Before Mr. Merritt's term has expired, the office will probably be in the million-dollar class.

The office is not only self-supporting, but it turns over to the Treasury a yearly net income of about \$112,000, notwithstanding the fact that over 75 per cent. of the business of the office consists of the receipt

and dispatch of official mails, which do not afford one cent of revenue.

The entire disbursements of the office now amount to about three and a half million dollars, comprehending expenses of the office proper, payments of money-orders, and miscellaneous expenditures authorized by the several bureaus of the Post-Office Department.

The total number of employees of the office is 960.

The postmaster's salary is \$6,000 per annum.

The quarters now occupied by the post-office are very satisfactory. The accommodations for taking in and sending out mails are almost perfect, and the work is performed systematically, economically, and with little or no friction. It is already evident, however, that in a few years, owing to the growth of business, and the encroachments which the Post-Office Department must of necessity make upon the space allotted to the city post-office, there will be new quarters needed; and these should be of such a character as to exactly fit post-office needs, and be sufficient for at least fifty years to come.